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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

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New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Mahmoud
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2016/532)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2016/532)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Sweden and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Chargé d'affaires of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I would like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2016/532, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

Before giving the floor to Mr. Haysom, I would like to take this opportunity, as this will be his final briefing to the Council as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to thank him warmly for his outstanding service. The Council wishes him every success in his future endeavours.

I now give the floor to Mr. Haysom.

Mr. Haysom: In my previous statement to the Security Council in March (see S/PV.7645) I said that in 2016 the survival of the National Unity Government would be an achievement. I stressed that the Government had to overcome five distinct hurdles to prevail. The Government would need to tackle a potent conflation of political, economic and security challenges. To do so, it would also need to face two additional challenges, namely, that of securing medium-term financial and military assistance from the international communityand that of making headway in laying the foundation for an effective peace process. A failure to overcome any of those distinct hurdles could have significant consequences for the country.

This is not to downplay the real progress that Afghanistan has made over the past decade, especially, for example, in education, human right, and especially women's rights, and in the emergence of a vibrant, democratic culture. That progress is widely acknowledged, and rightly so. Rather, the objective was to draw attention to the formidable obstacles that Afghanistan faces and to underline the need for a concerted response to the challenges from all stakeholders, including the international community.

I am pleased to note that there have been positive steps in meeting some of those five challenges since I last addressed the Council. On the economic front, we have noted progress in revenue collection, in meeting International Monetary Fund benchmarks and in developing thoughtful medium-term plans for reform and for economic development under difficult conditions. There has also been distinct progress in the management of public finances. And, as we did only two years ago, we do not fear an imminent default in civil-service salary payments.

We should acknowledge some of the milestones that have been reached on some of the most ambitious projects, developed in collaboration with other countries in the region. The past month has seen the inauguration of the Salma hydroelectric dam, the CASA 1000 electricity project and a trilateral economic agreement among Afghanistan, India and Iran. The agreement on the development of the Chabahar Port will open up a major new corridor for regional trade. Those developments come on the back of the earlier launch of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India natural gas pipeline project. Projects of such scale take time to deliver, but have real potential to transform Afghanistan into the regional hub it aspires to be. They show what can be achieved through regional partnerships.

On the security front, there has been a deliberate response by the security forces to the lessons learned

from the dynamics and developments of last year. The battlefield in many areas is in a state of flux, with gains and reversals but with neither side effecting clear dominance. The security forces continue to face serious challenges, including in addressing questions of morale, leadership, attrition and logistics. For now, though, they are holding their ground.

I am pleased to note that the nominees for the positions of Minister of Defence and head of the National Directorate of Security were confirmed by the Wolesi Jirga only yesterday. That is a positive development that ends a protracted period of uncertainty, and which will hopefully have both a positive operational impact and boost morale.

Quite correctly, Afghanistan has been canvassing support for a regional counter-terrorism strategy, while recognizing that peace in Afghanistan and stability in the region demand and deserve a regional effort. I believe that the region accepts that logic and that responsibility.

However, I remain deeply concerned about the impact that the high level of violence is having on the civilian population. There has been no let-up during Ramadan, during which period there have been some reports of disturbing brutality, including attacks on worshippers. Only yesterday, an incident in Badakhshan caused the deaths of 10 civilians, among them several children. Civilian casualty levels remain high and conflict-related displacement continues. I am especially concerned about the trend of targeted attacks on civilians working in the judicial sector and on journalists.

In my view, there is a risk that the conflict could enter a new phase, which could see retaliatory acts of vengeance and an escalating spiral of violence. I remind all parties to the conflict of their obligations to protect civilians from the impact of hostilities. Perpetrators of human rights and humanitarian law violations must be held to account, both to ensure justice for victims and to effectively reduce harm to the civilian population through deterrence. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has especially had cause recently to draw attention to the inviolate status of schools and medical clinics during conflict.

Progress in the areas of the economy and security is imperative so that the Afghan people have confidence in their Government, and it is especially important at this time, as the Government seeks to secure, in Warsaw and in Brussels, a firm and longer-term of international support — the third hurdle.

Serious engagement on the part of the Government with donors to address the issues that would promote success at those meetings is acknowledged. We would strongly support the Afghan appeal that development assistance is a more effective way of dealing with migration than bearing the expense of integrating migrants in host countries. However, what is expected of Afghanistan is not proof of its considerable needs, but of its demonstrable capacity to utilize resources effectively so that aid has a real impact.

There have been real attempts to meet donor expectations, as we have seen through progress in refreshing mutual accountability indicators and in providing an Afghanistan development framework. Efforts to counter corruption are moving beyond statements of intent. The establishment by President Ghani of the high council on governance, justice and anti-corruption is a first step in that regard, as is the setting up of the anti-corruption justice centre. The appointment of a new Attorney General was another positive step. The challenge ahead will be to demonstrate results, not only on paper and in the machinery of governance but also in the everyday lives of Afghans.

While we remain hopeful that the Warsaw meeting will be successful, preparations for the Brussels conference are still a work in progress. Afghanistan needs increasingly to appreciate the range of compelling demands from other countryies competing for donor dollars. The donor community, for its part, needs to recognize that its expectations of reform should be realistic when measured against the full range of challenges facing the Afghan State.

With regard to the establishment of a viable peace process, with the failure, so far, of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group to midwife such a process, and the recent death of Taliban leader Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor, such a process seems unlikely in the short term. We believe, however, that there are elements within the Taliban movement who are questioning whether they can win militarily — at least in the short term — and wondering whether a purely military goal is desirable.

During my tenure, UNAMA has engaged intensively in the pursuit of peace, both by supporting others' initiatives and by proposing and pursuing our

own. Most recently, we teamed up with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to insist jointly to the Taliban on the need for a viable peace process and to emphasize that a peaceful resolution of the long and bitter conflict was not a second prize, but a preferable outcome. A continued refusal to accept that will earn them only outcast status.

We maintain our view that peace is not a luxury, but a necessity without which Afghanistan as we know it is not sustainable. Afghans must eventually agree the arrangements by which they can live together in peace and harmony. I am disappointed that there has not yet been any traction on peace efforts, but I remain optimistic that such a process will eventually emerge.

Finally, on the political front, slow progress in advancing electoral reforms and setting an election calendar is one indicator of the need for greater political cohesion and a need for the members of a fragmented political class to acknowledge their shared destiny. On 13 June, the Wolesi Jirga voted against the draft structure law, thereby necessitating further review and discussions. The date of 17 June — the last date for announcing, pursuant to Constitutional requirements, the electoral calendar for the promised elections on 15 October — has come and gone, and there still appears to be no agreement on the way forward.

Continued uncertainty about the electoral calendar will contribute to challenges to the legitimacy of both the National Unity Government and the Parliament, which has long overstayed its term of office. An increasingly vocal opposition, drawing on the dissatisfaction prompted by the economic and security downturn but otherwise divided in its aspirations, appears to be coalescing around a common demand for a new Government arrangement.

A political confrontation is the last thing Afghanistan needs as it endeavours to cope with its current challenges, particularly in the period immediately preceding the Brussels conference, when Government effectiveness will surely fall under the spotlight. I, together with my international colleagues, have urged all political leaders to adopt a broader, more collaborative approach, rather than allowing the current fragmentation and division to stand. That applies to the cohabitation between the legislature and the executive, among the elements within the National Unity Government, and with the political opposition outside of it.

Looking forward with the insights I have gained over the past four years, I remain optimistic that Afghans can meet the challenges that they face. For that I rely on an appreciation of two qualities. The first is the resilience of the Afghan people in facing down their difficult challenges. The second is the existence of a real pan-Afghan patriotism, which survives in the face of sectarian loyalties. That is a quality that, from my experience in other war-afflicted countries, should not be undervalued. Because it is endowed with those two qualities, it is possible for Afghanistan not only to prevail to survive in 2016 but also to grow stronger as a result.

As this is my last briefing to the Security Council in my capacity as Special Representative for Afghanistan, I would like to thank my colleagues for their dedication to the work and values of the United Nations. A mission functions on the enthusiasm, professionalism and commitment of its staff, and in UNAMA I was extremely well served.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Haysom for his briefing. We would once again extend our warm thanks to him for all that he has done, as well as our very warm wishes for success in his future endeavours.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Saikal (Afghanistan) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate the President for the very able way he has been leading the work of the Security Council this month.

(*spoke in English*)

I express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2016/532) on the situation in my country. I would also like to thank my friend Mr. Nicholas Haysom for his last briefing as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan. I pay tribute to his contribution to the life of our country during the crucial years of transition. I would also like to welcome another good friend Ambassador Tadamichi Yamamoto as the incoming Special Representative of the Secretary-General, with whom I have had the pleasure of working in Kabul.

I also wish to convey my deepest condolences in connection with the tragic atrocity that occurred in Orlando last week and yesterday's attacks in Kabul and Badakhshan. Our thoughts and prayers are with the

victims and their families. We welcome the statements of condemnation that the Security Council issued following each of those attacks.

I am pleased to report that the country has shown greater resilience in countering the ongoing challenges since the Council's deliberations on Afghanistan in March (see S/PV.7645). As I speak here today, we have just left behind us the spring season with high casualties and setbacks for the Taliban and other terrorist groups. Actors from Afghanistan's region, along with international partners, are coming together to give a more collective response to the violent extremism and terrorism emanating from the region. A number of multinational development projects have either been launched or come to fruition, creating new hope for peaceful coexistence, connectivity and prosperity in the region.

Afghanistan and its regional and international partners appear more determined than ever to prevent the continuation of violence from taking development hostage. The re-emergence of Afghanistan as a symbol of international cooperation and partnership is gaining momentum. Nevertheless, the increased civilian casualties and internal displacement and the ramifications of the cowardly behaviour of the Taliban and their supporters to compensate for their losses have been alarming.

Last winter, the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) — made up of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States — finalized a road map for the peace process. New opportunities were presented to those willing to engage in talks. The QCG members agreed to take all the necessary measures against those who refused to engage in a political resolution of the conflict in Afghanistan.

The expectation was that the Taliban would use that opportunity and join the process. Sadly, on 12 April, they responded with their so-called spring offensive, launched simultaneously across 42 different locations in our country and causing heavy civilian suffering and proving once again that they cannot be reconciled to peaceful political initiatives. Given the brilliant performance of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, the Taliban suffered heavy losses during the first stage of the Taliban onslaught. To avenge their losses, the Taliban plotted, and claimed responsibility for, the deadly Kabul terrorist attack on 19 April, killing and wounding 411 persons, mostly civilians.

On 25 April, President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai addressed a joint meeting of the National Assembly of Afghanistan. He called on Pakistan to respect the QCG agreements and take action against terrorists who, according to the credible intelligence from our own agencies as well as from our international partners and from publicly recorded confessions by Pakistani authorities themselves, have their bases and leaders in that neighbouring country. President Ahmadzai said that if Pakistan refused to carry out military operations on its soil against the terrorists, then it should surrender them to our courts to face justice. We believe that there is a need for political will and honest police action, rather than nuclear deals or F-16s, to fulfil that task. President Ahmadzai added that, despite our desire and efforts to advance regional cooperation, we would have no choice but to refer the case to the Security Council and take serious diplomatic measures, unless there was a change in the policy of using terrorist proxies against Afghanistan.

In contrast to the unforthcoming attitude of a certain neighbouring country, other QCG members have remained committed to giving — or have even already given — effect to their words. On 22 May, Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour was tracked and killed by a United States airstrike in the Balochistan province of Pakistan. The incident also exposed his Pakistani passport with a fake name, which he had used to fly from Pakistani airports numerous times. Despite that, the charade of plausible deniability, duplicity and blaming Afghan weaknesses continue. That must come to an end if we are to succeed in countering terrorism.

In the past 15 years, numerous leading terrorist figures, including the Al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and Taliban leaders Mullah Omar and Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, have lived and died in Pakistan. The fact that notorious terrorist leaders were found and killed in their safe havens there is clear proof that the country has violated the sovereignty of other nations. That constitutes a flagrant violation of the resolutions 1373 (2001) and 2255 (2015), on the sanctions regime against the Taliban. We believe that there is an urgent need for proper implementation of the existing counter-terrorism resolutions of the Security Council.

Following the failure of their so-called spring offensive, the Taliban have resorted to stepping up

highway banditry and the killing or kidnapping civilians. In late May, they kidnapped 130 civilian bus passengers in Kunduz; the fate of some of them is still unknown. Earlier today, the Taliban again took multiple travellers hostage in the province of Helmand. Meanwhile, our neighbour's provocative actions along the de facto separation line, including the illegal construction of military installations, abuse of our nationals and restrictions on trade and transit, have escalated. In the past three months, the violation of our sovereignty and territorial integrity continued with the firing of over 820 foreign artillery shells on our eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Khost, Paktika, Kunar and Nouristan, causing civilian casualties and material losses.

Most recently — in contravention of bilaterally agreed consultation mechanisms — our neighbour attempted to build new infrastructure at the Torkham Pass, thereby provoking an unnecessary military clash that produced casualties on both sides. The situation, which is a threat to international peace and security, remains tense, with a devastating impact on trade and transit. As a responsible Member of the United Nations, and under Article 33 of the Charter of the United Nations, Afghanistan has submitted 19 protest notes to Pakistan and summoned that country's head of mission in Kabul three times in the past three months.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's Government and Parliament have called for a diplomatic solution to the illegal construction at Torkham Pass. An Afghan delegation was sent to Islamabad to explore a diplomatic breakthrough. We hope the voice of reason will prevail, but our message is very clear: make no mistake — I repeat, make no mistake — the proud Government and the people of Afghanistan have not, do not and will not surrender to intimidation, violence and aggression. Our history is a testimony to that.

Apart from the Taliban, constantly morphing global and regional terrorist groups seek to turn Afghanistan into a launching pad against Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia and the Far East. It is imperative that we remain vigilant and proactive against them. Despite the recent heavy blows inflicted by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces on the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaieda, those groups continue to position themselves to re-emerge in Afghanistan. Al-Qaieda has gone dark and deep. Other regional terrorist networks with links to Central Asian republics, Chechnya and China are highly active in our region.

Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, in coordination with other terror groups, remains a long-term threat to the security and stability of our region. More important, most of those terrorist groups and networks enjoy the facilitation and orchestration services of elements within the Pakistani State structure who believe in the use of violence to pursue political objectives. Any country contemplating the use of good and bad terrorists against each other and against others is playing with fire and will catch fire itself. It is imperative that the international community undertake an initiative to establish objective criteria to identify and confront State sponsorship of terrorism in our neighbourhood.

Despite the challenges, Afghanistan remains committed to the peace process with reconcilable Afghan elements, parallel to strengthening its defence and security capabilities. However, it is important that we remain vigilant against the instrumentalization and misuse of the peace process by supporters of the Taliban to buy time and refuel their war machine. One can talk about peace only with those who value genuine and results-oriented negotiations. But the world has yet to see sincerity on the part of the Taliban and their supporters.

I must pay particular tribute to the brave men and women of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. I am pleased to report that the security forces, despite suffering high casualty rates, continues to move from strength to strength, proving an invaluable asset and partner in the global struggle against terrorism. We are grateful for the continuous partnership of the international community. We welcome last week's announcement by the United States on further ground and air support to the security forces. We look forward to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Warsaw Summit in two weeks' time, which will review international support for the Afghan security forces and reiterate the pledges of our international partners.

Afghanistan has moved to complete or achieve progress on a number of major national and regional projects on energy and trade. Recently, we signed an agreement with a Turkish company to explore expanding the Kajaki dam in Helmand. Afghanistan and India inaugurated the Saima irrigation and power dam in Herat. Another historic occasion was the signing of a transit trade agreement among Afghanistan, India,

and Iran on the Chabahar Port. We already started to export agricultural products through that new trade route. The leaders of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan launched the construction of the CASA 1000 project. Afghanistan is determined to continue its outreach to all regional partners for mutual growth and prosperity, but at the same time remains steadfast in refusing to allow obstructive policies in the neighbourhood to dictate its direction.

We are currently working on the development strategy framework, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to be presented at the Brussels conference on Afghanistan in October. We look forward to generous investments from the international community in support of the implementation of that strategy. We are committed to the full implementation of the September 2014 agreement on the formation of the National Unity Government. We are working with all stakeholders to identify and remove obstacles and expedite the electoral reform and convocation of the Loya Jirga on amending the Constitution.

As we approach the Brussels conference, I am pleased to report that over 90 per cent of Afghanistan's 2015-2016 commitments in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework are either complete or nearing completion. Afghanistan has established the High Council on Governance, Justice and Anti-Corruption, which oversees the national anti-corruption strategy, and has implemented anti-corruption measures in the justice sector, which are bound to improve governance. The Parliament has given votes of confidence to the new Ministers of Interior and Defence, the Attorney General and the Head of the National Directorate of Security.

Despite rising civilian casualties due to attacks by extremist factions, the determination of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces to protect civilian lives remains steadfast. The Government has reiterated its commitment to promoting human rights, continues to work on revising the penal code and professionalizing the Afghan National Police, and has submitted its first periodic report to the United Nations Committee against Torture. Children's protection units are operational in different regions of the country to prevent the recruitment of children into the armed forces. Multiple women's protection and family guidance centres for survivors of domestic violence are open and functional, which shows the Government's continued support to rehabilitating victims of violence.

The humanitarian situation remains fragile, with an increase in conflict-related displacements in extreme weather conditions. Earlier this year, I was very pleased to sign the Paris Climate Agreement on behalf of my Government, which I believe puts us on the right track to make progress towards environmental and social integrity. Afghanistan is ranked among the most vulnerable countries facing the adverse impact of climate change, which affects our economic situation as well.

The ongoing flight of Afghans and the significant numbers of internally displaced remain a cause for concern, especially against the backdrop of the decrease in voluntary repatriations. Terrorist attacks on various aid organizations have hampered humanitarian assistance in several cases, and rendered refugee resettlement programmes more precarious. However, our Government is fully committed to finding sustainable solutions for the repatriation of Afghan refugees, with the support of the international community. I welcome the deliberations at the World Humanitarian Summit, and assure the Council that Afghanistan will work with our international partners to address this serious humanitarian situation.

According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's socioeconomic analysis in its *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2015*, the estimated gross value of opiates in Afghanistan decreased from 13 per cent of the country's gross domestic product in 2014 to 7 per cent in 2015. This demonstrates our commitment to curbing the menace of narcotics, and we will continue to work with the international community to garner support for the Afghan national drug action plan to counter the threat of illicit drugs.

Let me conclude by saying that 2015, the first post-transition year, was a year of survival for Afghanistan, but 2016 has inaugurated the era of consolidation of the gains that we have collectively made in the past 15 years. Together, we will pave the way for the long-term sustainability of progress in our country. I thank the entire Council and almost all other United Nations Member States that have been part of our journey so far, either through sweat and toil or in spirit.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by expressing our indignation over and strong condemnation of the

terrible attacks yesterday in Kabul and Badakhshan. Most of the victims were defenceless civilians going about their daily lives; many of them were children. No goal, political, religious or otherwise, can justify actions of this nature.

This morning, the Security Council issued a press release vigorously condemning these acts, which reiterates in no uncertain terms that any form of terrorism is a criminal act that is absolutely inexcusable, whatever the motivation invoked by its perpetrators. The release further notes that those responsible for these acts will sooner or later be held accountable. There is no doubt that the international community and the Security Council steadfastly support the process towards peace, democracy and stability that the Afghan people themselves have decided to embrace and spearhead. I would ask Ambassador Saikal to convey to the Government of Afghanistan our condolences and heartfelt solidarity with the Afghan people.

I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom. His presence among us will be the last in his current capacity. We therefore take this opportunity to express our gratitude for his years of steadfast commitment and tireless dedication to Afghanistan and to the Council as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for four years, if we count his two years as Deputy Special Representative. It is been a true pleasure for my delegation to work closely with him and his team as penholder of the Security Council for Afghanistan. We have always had the highest regard for his commitment to progress and reconciliation in Afghanistan, and we wish him every success in his future endeavours. Henceforth, his successor, Ambassador Yamamoto, can count on the support and collaboration of Spain.

It is abundantly clear after reading the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/532) and hearing Mr. Haysom's briefing that Afghanistan's challenges persist and that it is at a turning point in its recent history. It behooves us to recognize the progress made, in particular since the National Unity Government has taken up functions. It has rolled out a robust reform agenda for the country's socioeconomic development.

We hail the Afghan National Peace and Development Framework, which seeks to establish a road map for reaching the self-reliance goals set forth in London in 2014, and will be presented in the upcoming ministerial conference to be held in October in Brussels. The decisive push in the fight against corruption under the direct leadership of President Ghani is also evident. We welcome the measures contemplating judicial reform, the regulation of procurement of public goods and services, and the establishment of a high council on governance, the rule of law and anti-corruption in an effort to institutionalize anticorruption policies. We commend the Government's decision to give priority attention to these matters.

In the context of human rights, the second annual dialogue on this topic between the European Union and Afghanistan, held just days ago in Kabul, brought to light the measures that have been adopted in this area, in compliance with Afghanistan's commitments, such as legal reform in the field of children's rights, criminal aspects of the law for the elimination of violence against women, and new commitments undertaken by Afghanistan with regard to various human rights instruments. We must now be equally diligent in ensuring the implementation of all of these important measures throughout the nation.

The events of the past few months make it clear that the challenges facing Afghanistan have not abated. We are alarmed by the deterioration of security, the increase of armed conflicts and the violence of insurgent and terrorist groups in the recently launched spring campaign, and the persistently high number of civilian casualties from this conflict. Yesterday's events were yet another manifestation of this reality.

We are also concerned over the deterioration of Afghan economic prospects, which may continue to decline if national security collapses further. The perceived lack of prospects among civilians is evidenced in the massive outflow of Afghan civilians towards other countries in search of opportunities which is a worrying consequence of these factors. We are also concerned about the lack of progress towards a process of peace and reconciliation, despite the undeniable efforts over the past few months of the members of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group, whom I thank once again.

The lack of progress in electoral reform, despite the steps taken towards that goal, hampers compliance with the electoral timetable and could have an adverse impact on the stability and functions of the State, which at this time is the principle goal of all the institutions and political actors of Afghanistan. We are

also concerned about the ongoing rise in the number of internally displaced persons and the conditions in which they find themselves.

To summarize, it is essential to ensure that the progress that has been achieved over the past 15 years is not lost. Today perhaps more than ever in the past, it is therefore particularly important to maintain the unanimous support of the international community for the current and future efforts of the Afghan Government to promote political stability, economic growth, and the well-being and rights of all Afghan men and women, as well as their fight against terrorism and insurgency and in favour of national reconciliation.

The NATO Summit that will take place in Warsaw a few days from now and the ministerial conference scheduled for October in Brussels, to which I referred earlier, will be particularly important opportunities to demonstrate our support for Afghanistan. In the context of the international community's support and help for Afghanistan, a particularly important role must be played by regional stakeholders. Afghanistan therefore must continue to coordinate and cooperate constructively with its neighbours.

Before concluding, I would like to refer to two particular issues that are of key priority for Spain. First, I welcome the recently adopted measures pertaining to Afghanistan's national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) . I am pleased to inform the Council that Spain, together with the United Kingdom, which is the penholder for that resolution, has proposed the inclusion of Afghanistan and UNAMA in the work of the informal experts group on women, peace and security created by resolution 2242 (2015). We have done so because we are convinced that a better understanding of all that Afghanistan and UNAMA have done in that field will be very useful to the increasingly important work of the Security Council in that area.

Secondly, while I recognize the progress made and political resolve demonstrated by the Afghan authorities in a significant number of human rights-related areas, I add the voice of Spain to those who have appealed to the Government of Afghanistan to establish a moratorium on the application of the death penalty and to advance towards the necessary legal reforms necessary to commute such sentences.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): Let me first express my gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. My gratitude also goes to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his last but, as usual, comprehensive briefing today. Japan appreciates Mr. Haysom's tireless efforts during the past two years as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and commends his achievements.

Today, I will start with a cultural aspect. Until two days ago, a special exhibition, entitled "Hidden Treasures from the National Museum in Kabul", was on display in Tokyo. There on display were 231 ancient art works from Afghanistan, enjoyed by more than 200,000 museum visitors in Fukuoka and Tokyo. In front of the National Museum in Kabul, there is a small board with a message: "Our nation stays alive when its culture stays alive". I heard that many visitors to the special exhibition in Tokyo were impressed by that message, thinking about the long history of Afghanistan and hoping for peace and stability in that country. The preservation of the Afghan cultural heritage has been one of the main areas of Japan's assistance to Afghanistan. Since 2003, Japan has been undertaking a project entitled "Safeguarding of the Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley", through the UNESCO/Japanese Funds-in-Trust Trust for the Preservation of World Cultural Heritage.

Afghanistan is rich, not only in culture, but also in agricultural and mineral resources. However, they are not fully accessed or utilized due to such obstacles as security concerns and underdeveloped infrastructure. It is very regrettable that civilian casualties in the first quarter of 2016 were the highest on record since 2009. Our assistance programmes on the ground cannot be implemented in their full scale because of Afghanistan's fragile security situation. Japan understands that Afghanistan is under the threat of violent extremism. At the same time, it is crucial for Afghanistan to realize economic and social self-reliance and sustainable growth so that it can overcome the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism. All the commitments made by the Government of Afghanistan must be translated into action.

In March, at the debate on UNAMA, Mr. Haysom said, "For 2016, survival will be an achievement for the National Unity Government" (*S/PV.7645, p. 2*). Indeed, 2016 is crucial for Afghanistan and the international community. Japan intends to contribute to achieving successful outcomes at the Brussels

conference in October, which will be an important milestone for the development of Afghanistan. The Afghan Government and the donors have been working towards consolidating the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework to help ensure the success of the Brussels conference. Among the priorities listed in the Framework, we highly value agriculture, energy and improving economic connectivity. With a view to ensuring the transparency and accountability of assistance, it is our hope that the opinions of the donors will be taken into account in the Framework.

Afghanistan has thrived at the crossroads of civilizations since ancient times. Now we place Afghanistan at the heart of Asia, which invites regional cooperation for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. Japan is determined, together with the international community, to continue supporting the Afghan Government's endeavour for peace and prosperity and to contribute to promoting economic cooperation and integration in the region.

In conclusion, I once again express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Haysom for his efforts in extremely difficult circumstances. In particular, Mr. Haysom successfully established a communication channel with the National Unity Government and has strongly supported its reform endeavours in such areas as humanitarian assistance, electoral reform, coordination of development assistance and anti-corruption. I wish Mr. Haysom all the best in his future career, and Japan intends to continue supporting UNAMA's activities under the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General as well.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to extend our deepest gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his detailed and useful briefing and his unrelenting efforts during his mandate as Head of UNAMA.

The Middle East and Central Asia share the same interest in and need for stability. Therefore, Egypt has always supported the Government of Afghanistan in its war against terrorism and in its tireless efforts to assert its control and sovereignty on all its territories. We also support the authorities of Afghanistan in their social and political efforts to ensure security and promote development and prosperity for all Afghanis.

We stress that drug trafficking threatens the security and stability of Afghanistan, as well as of Central Asia. In this regard, we highlight the importance and need for close coordination at the international and regional levels with the Afghani authorities to fight drug trafficking. This is part and parcel of the efforts to fight terrorism because drugs are one of the main financing sources for terrorist groups and armed militias. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and relevant regional organizations, which have helped Afghanistan address this problem which undermines efforts to promote development and peace in the region.

In line with the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/532); General Assembly resolution 70/77, entitled "The situation in Afghanistan", adopted in December 2015; and Security Council resolution resolution 2274 (2016), which was adopted in March, it is clear that the international community has sounded the alarm against the ever-growing presence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province. Indeed, that terrorist organization has managed to maintain its stronghold over the east of the country. It is a cancerous tumour that must be treated, fought and eliminated wherever it is, in line with the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

In the same regard, we stress our ongoing readiness to train army and police officers through high-level specialized sessions because Egypt's sole interest is to ensure security and stability in Afghanistan by helping the Afghan National Army in its war against terrorist organizations. We therefore hope to promote the tripartite cooperation programme in this vital field so that donors are able to provide the necessary funding to cover the costs of these very important specialized training sessions.

Egypt is promoting its constructive role as a supporting country of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul process. At the international level, we note the need to address the issue of Afghanistan effectively and extensively in all relevant forums, especially at the ministerial conference on Afghanistan to be held on 4 and 5 October in Brussels.

In conclusion, Egypt continues to closely follow the political and security situation in Afghanistan because it believes it share a common goal: to support the capacity of Afghanistan, which has suffered for many decades,

to overcome these difficult challenges and achieve peace, stability, security and sustainable development.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity you have provided us by convening this meeting to once again examine the situation in Afghanistan. At the outset, allow me to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom for the report (S/2016/532) he has just introduced to us and to commend his extraordinary work as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Recent developments in Afghanistan show the persistence of the political, security and humanitarian problems, as well as others, which this country continues to experience and which represent a serious source of concern. Indeed, the situation in the country unfortunately continues to be marked by increased armed clashes and drug trafficking, a weakened economy and political divisions, not to mention the worsening of the humanitarian situation, which all make the stabilization and national reconciliation process difficult.

It must therefore be said that, despite the important meetings that have been held within the Quadrilateral Coordination Group on the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Process and the significant progress made towards an agreement with Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin, efforts continue to fall short owing to the demands of the Taliban for the withdrawal of international forces, the recurring attacks during the spring offensive and the reprisals following the execution of the members of that group. The situation is worsened internally by the political divisions, which I just mentioned, and regionally by the recent tensions on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which led to deadly armed clashes.

Despite this difficult security environment, UNAMA — and I pay tribute to its efforts once again — has fortunately done everything possible to support the peace and reconciliation process of the Afghan people. With regard to the international technical and financial partners and other donors that continue to invest in the stability of the country and the security of its people, we encourage them to continue their efforts to support Afghanistan's reconstruction and development, but also to continue to lend their support to the Government's efforts to restore peace and security.

In this regard, we welcome the valuable support provided by the international community and various other partners active in that country. We strongly urge all other partners who have not yet done so to do the same, because technical assistance and expertise continue to be necessary to ensure the capacity-building of the Afghan army to allow it to assume responsibility for the country's security by preventing the advances of the Taliban and curbing the spread of the Islamic State.

We must also point out and welcome the substantial progress that has been achieved thanks to regional cooperation, in particular through the Istanbul process on regional security and cooperation for peace and stability in Afghanistan. Such progress must be encouraged, in particular in the context of combatting terrorism and especially in combatting the Islamic State, which represents a genuine threat to the region. In that spirit, my delegation would like to solemnly call upon Afghanistan and Pakistan to continue to work together to find an agreed solution to the difficult problem of regional security in general and the problem of the Taliban in particular.

The humanitarian and human rights situation, like the political and security situation, to which we have just referred, remains a source of concern. There are close to 1.2 million internally displaced persons within Afghanistan, which also has one of the largest refugee population in the world. According to recent estimates, 2.6 million Afghans are living outside their country. Added to that is the high price that continues to be paid by the civilian population, in particular women and children. My delegation would therefore like to reiterate its appeal to host countries to demonstrate greater flexibility in the manner in which they deal with Afghan asylum-seekers.

While welcoming some of the initiatives taken by the Government with regard to freedom of expression, we call on all Afghan parties to ensure that they protect the media and journalists. My delegation, while paying tribute to the courage shown by the Afghan Government, which has resolutely undertaken to combat corruption, calls upon the international community, and in particular the United Nations and other partners with expertise in this area, to provide the necessary support to the Afghan authorities to help them to eradicate this scourge, which continues to pose a serious threat to the security, stability and economy of the country.

In closing, I should like to express once again my delegation's full support to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and recall the fact that the combination of regional and international efforts, in support of all of the efforts being made by the Afghan parties, remains vital in order to enable the country to overcome, on a lasting basis, the political, security and economic challenges that it has been facing for so many decades.

For that reason, my delegation hopes that at the upcoming Brussels conference it will be possible to make progress towards economic reconstruction and stabilization in Afghanistan. We hope also that solutions will be found very soon, particularly in terms of a consensus with regard to the presence of the Resolute Support Mission, and that lasting solutions will also be arrived at with respect to the financing of Afghan forces that would make it possible to resolve issues related to the peace process and the combat against terrorism.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I wish at the outset to thank Special Representative Haysom for his briefing.

Afghanistan continues to demonstrate resilience in confronting significant security, governance and economic challenges. We recognize and welcome the gains made in Afghanistan over the past 15 years, and we all share an interest in preserving and building on these gains. We see three key themes as necessary for the continued development of Afghanistan: security, reconciliation and reform.

First, with respect to security, the conflict continues to exact a significant toll on the civilian population with record high numbers this year, with almost a third of the victims being children. In April, the United Nations reported nearly 2,000 casualties in the first three months of the year, a 2 per cent increase compared with the number of civilian casualties in 2015. Just yesterday we saw attacks by the Taliban and anti-Government forces continuing to take place in civilian-populated areas. We also remain deeply concerned by the terrorist activities of the Haqqani network, Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Afghanistan, as well as the threat that improvised explosive devices continue to pose to the civilian population.

In that regard, we commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for facilitating a high-level dialogue on civilian protection this past May that brought together representatives of the Afghan Government, the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission. All participants reaffirmed their commitment to the prevention and mitigation of civilian casualties, and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior and the National Directorate of Security, to strengthen the accountability and transparency of Afghan security institutions.

We also recognize that the Afghan forces are fighting courageously to defend threatened populations, especially in Helmand and in parts of Baghlan and Kunduz. There is no question that Afghan forces have become more capable and professional. They have demonstrated the commitment to staying and fighting and, when control over territory is lost, to working tenaciously to regain it.

The United States remains committed to assisting Afghanistan and the Resolute Support Mission. We will maintain 9,800 troops in Afghanistan through most of this year and 5,500 thereafter, located at a small number of bases, including at Baghlan, Jalalabad in the east, and Kandahar in the south. We will also continue to provide financial support for the Afghan forces. We encourage all other donors to the Afghan security forces to do the same.

Afghanistan has requested donors to renew their funding for the Afghan forces at or near current levels through 2020. We urge donors to do so at, or ahead of, next month's NATO summit, in Warsaw.

Turning to reconciliation, in January Afghanistan and Pakistan, with support from the United States and China, launched the Quadrilateral Coordination Group on the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Process to synchronize cooperation for the initiation of direct talks with the Taliban. The Quadrilateral Coordination Group has met five times since its formation in January and has endorsed key principles, terms of reference and a road map, which serve as a guiding framework. The Group is committed to exploring all avenues to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. The strike against Mullah Mansoor should serve as a clear signal to the Taliban that we are prepared to take action against those who plan to potentially harm United States personnel and who continue to oppose peace. It is not,

however, indicative of a change in policy and does not foreshadow a new military initiative.

The United States remains committed to encouraging the peace process between the Afghan Government and the Taliban, and we view such a process as the only avenue for ending the war. There is no military solution to the conflict. The Taliban must understand that they can achieve their goals, including the withdrawal of international military forces, only through a peace process that leads to a negotiated settlement.

Now I should like to make a few points about reform. The security of Afghanistan is inextricably linked to the nation's economic and political stability and progress. It is important to recognize some of the significant, though largely unheralded, progress that the Afghan Government has made. Despite the economic challenges facing Afghanistan, the Afghan Government successfully completed the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) staff-monitored programme on 13 April, meeting a series of IMF-designated benchmarks of progress towards improving Government revenues, strengthening the banking system and building a track record for a future IMF financial arrangement. We welcome the current negotiations with the IMF on a modest new programme with new benchmarks.

We also note that President Ghani is taking initiatives to root out corruption. He has worked to recover Kabul Bank assets and is reopening criminal cases against those who stole this money from the Afghan people. He has removed corrupt judges and other public officials. We all recognize, however, that countering corruption is a long-term process. President Ghani, though, asked that we hold him to his commitments at the London anti-corruption summit last month. We applaud his promises to establish a High Council on governance, the rule of law and anti-corruption, and to establish an anti-corruption justice centre, among other steps.

The Afghan Government is making tangible progress on self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework indicators. Already 15 of the 39 goals under the Framework have been achieved, including the successful completion of the IMF's staff-monitored programme and the filing of asset declarations by senior officials.

As we approach the conference on Afghanistan to be held in Brussels in October, we encourage the Afghan Government to continue to deliver on its reform commitments under the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework and to make progress on electoral reform, private-sector reform and women's issues. Of course, the United States remains committed to working with UNAMA, which stands as a symbol of the world's commitment to the Afghan people. UNAMA must continue in its important efforts to help Afghanistan with governance, development and promoting respect for human rights, as well as to coordinate humanitarian assistance, donor support and counter-narcotics efforts and to support reconciliation.

Finally, let me join others in thanking Special Representative Haysom for his tireless and exemplary efforts. The United States is truly grateful for his service, and we know that UNAMA will continue its work to build on the strong foundation he has laid. We all wish him well as he takes on new challenges.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): We wish to thank Special Representative Haysom for his briefing. He reminds us of the complex set of challenges facing Afghanistan. We thank him also for his patient commitment to achieving peace in Afghanistan and wish him well in his next, no-less-difficult, assignment. We look forward to continuing the Security Council's excellent relationship with his successor.

Almost 40 years after the Saur Revolution, 20 years since the fall of Kabul to the Taliban and 15 years since the United States-led intervention that followed the 11 September attacks, sustainable peace for Afghanistan continues to appear as elusive as ever. The National Unity Government continues to face difficult political, economic and security challenges.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2016/532) identifies several areas in which modest progress has been made during the reporting period, including on financial planning and political appointments. We welcome this week's confirmation of the appointments for the positions of Minister of National Defence and of Director General of the National Directorate of Security, the last significant vacant positions to be filled in the Afghan Cabinet. We also welcome the filling of the last vacancy in the Afghan Supreme Court, and we acknowledge and welcome the continued determination and increasing professionalism of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

However, that progress is more than offset by the enormous human toll the conflict continues to exact. The past three months have witnessed an increased frequency of attacks on civilians, including the

deadliest incidents in Kabul since the Taliban rule ended 15 years ago, as well as killings of Government and judicial officials. Yesterday's separate attacks, killing another 30 people, mainly civilians, underscore the determination of the Taliban and other armed groups to maintain that bloody trajectory. It is hard to take seriously the Taliban's claim to be an alternative Government when they show such disregard for the lives of ordinary Afghans and of those who put themselves at risk in the international effort to help Afghanistan.

It is also more than disappointing to note that no progress has been made during this period in the peace and reconciliation process or in achieving the regional cooperation necessary to effectively meet the serious threats facing the region. Vital milestones for the National Unity Government are yet to be reached. Economic growth remains low, with few prospects for any improvement in the short term, and outward migration continues.

All of that might seem to represent a poor return on the vast resources that have been poured into Afghanistan's security and reconstruction over the past decade. However, it is very clear from past history that, in the absence of sustained international support, Afghanistan will risk slipping once again into chaos. Whether we like it or not, the Government and the people of Afghanistan need our continuing support.

The conferences to be held later this year in Warsaw and Brussels will provide important opportunities for the international community to assess in what is needed and what can be provided. At the same time, the international community will be expecting clear results from the Afghan Government in return. The National Unity Government and regional actors need to show that they are brave enough to take the steps needed to achieve sustainable progress in addressing the challenges they face in a wide range of closed critical areas. The National Unity Government needs to provide the coherent and effective leadership its people so desperately need. We endorse Special Representative Haysom's call for the Government to adopt a broad and collaborative approach in the ongoing political dialogue. Similarly, we call on regional leaders to set aside their differences in pursuit of their shared interests in countering terrorism and in addressing the conditions that breed instability and extremism to the detriment of the security of the entire region.

The resumption of a meaningful peace and reconciliation process remains another critical challenge. We recognize the difficulty of achieving that in the short term. But there is no getting around the fact that achieving a sustainable and peaceful Afghanistan is ultimately dependent on achieving some form of reconciliation between the Afghan State and some elements of the armed opposition. As a Council, we also need to consider what practical steps we can take in supporting the peace and reconciliation process.

New Zealand continues to believe that the sanctions regime established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) can play an important role in that regard and that sanctions can, and should, be used more actively to support progress on the ground. That includes targeted measures to reduce the ability of the Taliban to seek a military solution. One example is by taking further steps to restrict access to improvised explosive devices and their components. Another is creating incentives for meaningful engagement in the peace and reconciliation process. Regular and meaningful engagement between the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2001) and key stakeholders is important to ensure that the sanctions regime complements broader efforts. We remain committed to do our part in that regard during our remaining time as Chair of the Committee.

One immediate action the 1988 Sanctions Committee can take is to ensure its listings remain up-to-date, particularly to keep pace with changes in the Taliban leadership. In that regard, we note that regard both the new Taliban leader and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan leader are not currently listed. That anomaly must be addressed as soon as possible.

We all stand to benefit from achieving a stable and peaceful Afghanistan, no more so than for its immediate neighbours and Afghanistan itself. New Zealand will continue to offer its support to Afghanistan and to the work of the Special Representative and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in ensuring that the political and security foundations are in place for Afghanistan to advance. We look forward to taking stock of progress in September.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I would like to to use this opportunity to add my voice to others on behalf of my Government to thank Special Representative Haysom for the way he has carried out what I think is an extraordinarily tough job, and one that he has

done with both flair and commitment. On behalf of my Government, adding what to others have said, I thank him very much indeed.

As we heard in today's briefing, Afghanistan still faces an exceptionally tough road ahead. As it works through myriad challenges, the latest civilian casualty figures from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) remind us of the ongoing human cost. Others have talked about some of the incidents that have happened recently. But looking back over time, nearly 59,000 civilians have been killed or severely injured since UNAMA records began. The vast majority were at the hands of anti-Government groups. Fifty-nine thousand is an extraordinary price to pay. It is a price being paid in Badakhshan and in Kabul, following attacks just yesterday. I offer my Government's condolences for all those who lost their lives or who were injured in those shameful attacks, including those working at the Canadian Embassy. I hope the Canadian Ambassador will convey that to his Government on our behalf.

It is clear that our job is far from done. And it is clear that the support of the Security Council and the international community remains vital to Afghanistan. Our collective action can have a direct positive impact on the lives of the Afghan people. We need to show that we are standing by Afghanistan in the months and years ahead. I see three areas where we can do so.

First, on the matter of security, the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces are admirably holding their own this year. They are repelling the Taliban's spring offensive and forcing back Da'esh as it tries to expand. But their task is formidable, and the longer-term stability of Afghanistan is dependent on their success. We therefore cannot just speak about our commitments to supporting Afghan security, we have to demonstrate it, too. The NATO Warsaw Summit in July will be an opportunity for States to show that resolve. The United Kingdom intends to provide $100 million each year to the Afghan national forces from 2017 to 2020. Meanwhile, 450 United Kingdom troops continue to provide military support and training as part of NATO's Resolute Support Mission. That includes helping the Afghan national army officer academy, where 1,300 officer graduates have been trained, with more female officers than ever.

In that regard, allow me to add my voice to that of Spain in saying that I am very pleased that we are including Afghanistan together on our joint work programme on women and peace and security. I call on other members of the international community to show their support, not just through their words inside the Chamber but through their actions and financial commitments outside of it.

My second point concerns development. Development and security are mutually reinforcing. Together we need not only to build an Afghanistan that is stable and resilient, but also self-reliant and prosperous. Continued development assistance will be critical to the future Afghanistan. It is therefore equally critical that we do not see a drop-off in assistance this year, particularly given the fragility of the Afghan economy. We look forward to the international community going to Brussels this year ready to make long-term financial commitment to Afghanistan. We also look forward to the Government of Afghanistan setting out the progress it has delivered so far and its priorities for the coming years, including on economic reform, job creation and tackling corruption.

My third and last point is that, if we want security and development to take hold in Afghanistan, then there needs to be political stability. That is why the United Kingdom supports the National Unity Government as it tackles Afghanistan's challenges head-on. We strongly believe that the best chance for reaching a negotiated peace starts with the stability of the National Unity Government, the effectiveness of the national forces and the support of Afghanistan's neighbours. It is therefore especially important that the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan work towards a stronger relationship. That is not only to stop the escalation of incidents like the one last week at the Torkham border crossing, but also to tackle the larger common threat of violent extremism. It is my firm view that the long-term interests of both Afghanistan and Pakistan are aligned. Their success is dependent, in part, on how much both countries recognize that.

Let me conclude with this final thought: Afghanistan still faces grave security, development and political challenges. Through the summits in Brussels and Warsaw and through the Council, we have a real chance to show the National Unity Government and the people of Afghanistan that they do not face those challenges alone. We need to keep bolstering the military, keep supporting the economy and keep building international and regional support. In doing that, we can help ensure that 2016 really does turn — to use the words of the

Ambassador of Afghanistan — from the year of survival to the year of consolidation.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his briefing on the quarterly report (S/2016/532) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan. We convey our deep appreciation and gratitude for the work of Mr. Haysom and for his contribution in facing, with the Afghanistan authorities and people, the great challenges in achieving peace and a better life. We praise the work of UNAMA in discharging its mandate under extremely difficult conditions while Afghanistan struggles to establish a society based on the fundamental values of peace, human rights and social equity.

This debate offers us an opportunity to assess the political, security and human rights situation, as well as the latest regional and international developments, concerning Afghanistan. The overall situation in the country, as portrayed in the report of the Secretary-General is most worrisome. In the past three months, the Afghan Government continued to face significant political, security and economic challenges. However, despite a dire situation, as Mr. Haysom stressed, important progress was achieved in the past 10 years. The Afghans and the international community must do everything in their power to ensure the gains are irreversible. We deeply regret that the initial impulse of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group on the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Process in its efforts to facilitate a peaceful solution to the conflict through dialogue between the Government and the Taliban did not bear the desired results.

As in the previous period, the security situation remained unstable, characterized by continuous and intense armed clashes in various regions of the country and terrorist attacks perpetrated by the Taliban, with a disastrous impact on the civilian population. We took note, with dismay, that over 1,900 civilian victims were documented in the period covered by the report, with 60 per cent of the deaths attributed to non-governmental elements. The indiscriminate killing of civilians deserves our most vigorous condemnation, and we urge all parties to the conflict to respect their obligations and human rights and international humanitarian law by putting an end to attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Continued and widespread armed clashes and very low economic growth generate a precarious humanitarian situation, characterized by increasing numbers of internally displaced people and a high number of Afghan migrants already in Europe. On the other hand, humanitarian access remains a matter of concern. Incidents involving humanitarian workers are on the rise, while humanitarian funding for food, nutrition, health care and refugee programmes are insufficient to meet such huge humanitarian needs.

The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces have shown increasing resilience despite the pressures they face, including rising casualty and attrition rates, which create great challenges to the sustainability of the forces, as underlined in the report of the Secretary-General.

It is common wisdom that long-term stability and prosperity in Afghanistan depend upon national reconciliation, based on respect of human rights and fundamental liberties, regional and international cooperation, mutual respect and non-interference in one another's internal affairs.

Afghanistan is pursuing regional commitments with an emphasis on the economy and security. During the period under review, regional cooperation appeared to be the most virtuous development in and around Afghanistan. The agreement among Afghan President Ghani, Iranian President Rouhani and Indian Prime Minister Modi on transport, trilateral transit and facilitation of trade among the three countries and the engagement by the countries of the region with the similar Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process as a platform for regional cooperation, including the fight against terrorism, are other welcome developments, as are as the consultations held in Kabul by the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force with Government officials on plans to develop a structure for a regional strategy on combating terrorism. In that regard, we commend the efforts on the part of the Afghan authorities to develop relations with regional partners in neighbouring countries in the fight against terrorism and in pursuing a political settlement to the conflict they have been engulfed in for so long.

We take good note of the determination on the part of the Afghan authorities and institutions to adopt more rigorous policies and practices and translate them into actions aimed at building the population's trust. The agenda for the reform of the Afghan Government has

started to produce a meaningful impact on the lives of the Afghans. The fight against corruption is a key feature of the agenda. We welcome the establishment, by a presidential decree, of a High Council on governance, Justice and Anti-corruption to oversee the drafting and implementation of a national anti-corruption strategy and presidential statements outlining measures to step up the anti-corruption drive.

In conclusion, we are mindful that the challenges faced by Afghanistan are immense. We join the Secretary-General in applauding Afghanistan's commitment, along with China, Pakistan and the United States, in the context of the Quadrilateral Coordination group on the Afghan peace and reconciliation process to reach a negotiated agreement between the Government and the Taliban for the achievement of sustainable peace for the Afghan people.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, we would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and for his courageous work as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We listened closely to the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Mr. Mahmoud Saikal.

For many years now, developments in the security situation in Afghanistan continue to be the subject of our extreme concern. Unfortunately, the situation is going from bad to worse. We fear that the armed opposition and terrorist groups will this year pursue their efforts to seize strategically important towns and gain control over large swathes of the country's territory. The Taliban movement, having announced the start of its spring offensive, is systematically carrying out high-profile attacks in various parts of Afghanistan, and most of them are against civilian populations. The series of terrorist attacks that took place on 20 June in various parts of the country is further evidence of this fact. I would ask Ambassador Saikal to convey our sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Afghanistan.

We are particularly concerned about the increase in the number of members of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the attempts of that group to absorb other armed opposition groups, mainly in the north of Afghanistan. It is our hope that the future leadership of UNAMA, in particular the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Yamamoto, will pay careful attention to this dangerous phenomenon.

We support the Government's approach to achieving national reconciliation. We are ready to support progress in the negotiations process, including being flexible on the possible softening of sanctions set up by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), on the Taliban, if it is not contrary to Afghanistan's national interests.

We welcome the appointment of the country's leading religious figure, Mr. Gilani, to the Head of the High Peace Council. We hope that, with his participation, the national reconciliation process will be given renewed dynamism.

We take note of the Afghan Government's intention to develop a dialogue with the armed opposition. We support any efforts made in that regard, but we are convinced that national reconciliation will be lasting only when it takes on a genuinely national character.

The main challenge in terms of reconciliation means involving the Taliban movement in the peace talks, but that has not yet been achieved. The Quadrilateral Coordination Group on the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Process needs to organize direct talks between the Government and the Taliban, although the important decisions that have already been taken have not, it would seem, led to any significant results. We call on the armed opposition to rise to the level of State responsibility for the fate of Afghanistan and its people, end its military activities, stop its reprisals and acts of terrorism and enter into a significant, substantive dialogue with the country's legitimate authorities.

Russia is ready to establish constructive cooperation with the Afghan leadership in order to support stability and an independent path forward for Afghanistan, so that the country can be free from terrorism and the drug threat.

We take note of the world's growing understanding of the important regional dimension of settling the conflict in Afghanistan, as well as the increased number of regional platforms that focus on Afghan issues. We believe it is important that, in the contex of such activities, regional stakeholders themselves should have a decisive role to play.

We are convinced that efforts to support Afghanistan should mainly be undertaken using the structures that have proved their worth, for example,

first of all, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), whose stakeholders, observers or partners in dialogue include practically all of the countries of the region, including Afghanistan. We welcome Afghanistan's official application to become a member of the SCO. We actively support steps by the Afghan Government, to which Ambassador Saikal referred, to establish economic cooperation and integration with regional neighbours.

We see considerable potential in enhancing counter-terrorism and anti-narcotics cooperation between Afghanistan and the SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. However, in this context we must say that the new NATO Resolute Support Mission has not yet achieved its declared goals. The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, which is courageously fighting the terrorist threat, is suffering major losses as it counters the opposition, as well as experiencing serious difficulties in effectively pushing back the opposition's onslaught. We take note of the decision of the United States Administration to halt its withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, which reflects a recognition that the security problem has not yet been resolved.

It must not be forgotten that Russia voted in favour of resolution 2189 (2014), on launching the Resolute Support operation, based on the belief that the North Atlantic alliance would report to the Security Council on the situation in Afghanistan in the context of that operation. NATO and the United States of America have a special responsibility for training the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and ensuring its effectiveness and security in Afghanistan. Another area of work is to ensure that no threat to third-party countries should come from Afghan territory. That said, the situation in this area — and I will say this directly — is alarming. An example of this is the situation in northern districts of Afghanistan, where there is a growing presence of foreign terrorist fighters and an increase in the activities of ISIL.

The drug problem poses a serious threat to the stability of Afghanistan itself, its neighbours in the region and the world at large. In addition to the direct harm it causes, drug production provides substantial and determinative financial support for terrorism. In that context, we believe it is necessary to step up efforts by the international community to fight drug trafficking from Afghan territory. We have no illusions about the 2015 statistics showing a significant drop in opium production in Afghanistan. We are concerned at forecasts of a significant increase in the poppy harvest this year.

The key to improved stability of the situation in Afghanistan is a militarily capable Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, which should on its own be able to ensure peace and stability in its own country. In February, Russia provided free delivery of weapons and munitions to meet the needs of Afghanistan's security forces. We will continue to help Kabul in training members of the structures of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces through the relevant Russian services, particularly since our two countries historically enjoy a high level of cooperation and mutual assistance in these areas. We will continue that work both bilaterally and through cooperation with international partners, despite the changes in the approach of the United States, NATO and many Western countries to implementing, together with the Russian Federation, joint projects to support Afghanistan.

The task of consolidating the efforts of the main external players remains the primary precondition for resolving the main problems in Afghanistan. Competition over areas of influence should be eliminated immediately, as should involvement in domestic affairs. We need to combine our efforts to ensure that there is national reconciliation in the country, that we eliminate the problem of terrorism and that we help Afghanistan back onto the path of sustainable development. We particularly stress the fact that the situation can be resolved only through good-neighbourliness, open international and regional cooperation and cooperation with the legitimate Government of Afghanistan, while respecting that State's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank you, Sir, for convening this open meeting on Afghanistan. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan, Mr. Haysom, for his briefing, and Ambassador Saikal, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement.

China strongly condemns the multiple terrorist attacks that took place in Afghanistan on 20 June. We express our profound sympathy to the families of the victims, as well as our sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Afghanistan.

By and large, the Afghan Government of National Unity has recently been operating effectively and

making substantial efforts to develop its economy, promote reconciliation and safeguard stability. Afghanistan continues to face grim challenges in the political, economic and security fields. There is a need for unity on the part of all Afghan communities, as well as the sustained attention, support and assistance of the international community. I wish to emphasize the following four points.

First, improvement in the security situation is the basis for Afghan stability. Recently, the security situation in Afghanistan has taken a turn for the worse. Domestic armed clashes have been escalating, with increasing civilian casualties. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Al-Qaida and other terrorist forces are seizing the opportunity to enhance their presence in Afghanistan, thus gravely jeopardizing Afghan safety and stability. The international community should enhance Afghan's self-defence and counter-terrorism capabilities by increasing its assistance to the country in the security sector so as to prevent setbacks in the security situation. We hope that the United Nations will strengthen its assessment of the security situation in Afghanistan; promote cooperation between Afghanistan and the countries of the region in the fight against terrorism, drugs and transnational crimes; and jointly create conditions conducive to improving the security situation in Afghanistan.

Secondly, promoting national reconciliation is a fundamental way of achieving a solution on the question of Afghanistan. China welcomes the recent peace agreement between the Afghan Government and Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan. We hope that it will serve as an example for the Afghan national reconciliation process. The international community should continue to exercise a positive influence on the parties concerned and fully support an inclusive reconciliation process led and owned by Afghans. The Afghan parties concerned must put the interests of the nation and the people above all else and resume peace talks as soon as possible.

Thirdly, strengthening governance is an important guarantee for Afghan development. In the final analysis, Afghan affairs must be managed by the Afghan people themselves. In the light of Afghanistan's development strategy and its concrete needs, the international community should provide more targeted assistance to the Afghan Government in terms of resources for governing the country and consolidate the results of its nation-building efforts. With national stability and prosperous development in mind, all Afghan communities should strengthen their unity and commit to resolving their differences through dialogue and consultations.

Fourthly, the promotion of economic and social development is a necessary condition for Afghan prosperity and stability. The international community must increase its assistance to Afghanistan; support the Afghan Government's efforts to halt its economic downturn, promote comprehensive economic and social development in Afghanistan, encourage and support the Afghan Govenrment in its efforts to fully leverage its advantages in terms of resources and location, strengthen cooperation with Afghanistan in the areas of infrastructure, trade, investment and human-resources training and promote Afghanistan's cooperation with neighbouring countries in their mutual interest so that Afghanistan can be integrated into robust regional development.

Resolution 2274 (2016) calls on all parties to actively participate in the One Belt, One Road initiative and other initiatives in the area of economic cooperation. We hope that all parties will comply with the resolution and actively participate in building regional connectivity, communication and economic cooperation. China and Afghanistan are friendly neighbours. China hopes that Afghanistan will achieve peace, security, stability and development as soon as possible. Recently, Mr. Abdullah, Afghanistan's Chief Executive Officer, visited China. China and Afghanistan jointly signed multiple important documents regarding cooperation in economy, technology, connectivity, communication and other areas.

China firmly supports Afghanistan's counter-terrorism efforts and will continue to provide Afghanistan with assistance to strengthen its security capabilities.

China firmly supports the Afghan peace and reconciliation process and stands ready to continue to play an active role in the Quadrilateral Coordination Group mechanism in order to help promote Afghan reconciliation.

China firmly supports Afghanistan's integration into regional cooperation efforts. We will align the One Belt, One Road initiative with Afghanistan's national transition and development strategy and continue to contribute to Afghans' early attainment of sustainable peace and development.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): First, I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom for his extensive briefing, and Ambassador Seikal for his statement. We value Special Representative Haysom's insights on the enormous security, political and economic challenges faced by Afghanistan and his persistent and untiring efforts to work with Afghan partners for peace.

We are supportive of the Afghan Government's unwavering commitment and ongoing efforts to achieve national unity and lasting stability, as rightly underscored by Ambassador Seikal. However, although we commend the best efforts of the Government and the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, it is troubling that the Taliban appear to be gaining ground and sowing fear among the vulnerable and long-suffering population. Yesterday's horrific string of attacks, for which the Taliban has claimed responsibility, provides an example of their continued barbarism. As such, we are pleased that the Council swiftly agreed to condemn the attacks and express solidarity with the people and the Government of Afghanistan as well as with the peoples and the Governments of Nepal and India. We remain convinced that the Taliban and other violent extremist and terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan must continue to be dealt with in a comprehensive manner. In that context, ongoing efforts to win hearts and minds of the Afghan population must be stepped up in order to deny the Taliban their support base.

Like many others that want to see a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan, Malaysia places much hope in the ability of the recently established Quadrilateral Coordination Group on the Afghan Peace and Reconciliation Process to successfully convene direct peace talks between the Government and the Taliban. Unfortunately, given the continuing Taliban intransigence, such hopes remain unachievable. The recent killing of the principal Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour, according to some analysts, would appear to have complicated the Group's efforts in that regard. Against such a development, no reiteration is required that meaningful progress towards sustainable peace and stability can be achieved only through a peaceful political settlement among the parties. Let us hope that the members of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group will continue to explore and pursue all avenues in facilitating early direct talks between the Government and the Taliban. In that respect, Malaysia is pleased to note the Afghan Government's steadfast commitment to implementing the Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. The Afghan Government's robust engagement and cooperation with regional partners and the international community, including through the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, is encouraging.

The NATO Warsaw Summit 2016 next month and the upcoming Brussels conference in October, in our view, present opportunities for partners to complement and assist the Afghan Government's reconstruction and development efforts. At the regional level, cooperation in addressing security issues and countering the threat of terrorism and extremism has thus far been encouraging. Pursuing further collective efforts involving the Afghan Government, regional partners and the United Nations in developing a framework for a regional counter-terrorism strategy within the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process is imperative. My delegation further notes that the Secretary-General's report on Afghanistan (S/2016/532) highlights, among other issues, the increasing number of civilian casualties, mainly attributable to anti-Government forces or elements. It is therefore not surprising that children continue to suffer disproportionately from the ongoing conflict, accounting for almost one-third of all civilian casualties.

On a positive note, Malaysia is encouraged by the strong progress in ending recruitment of children by the Afghan National Police. Malaysia strongly encourages full implementation of the Action Plan and Road Map towards Compliance, particularly by the Afghan local police. However, the plight of the children is not over, as non-State armed groups and violent extremist groups continue to recruit and retain children among their ranks through manipulation or coercion, facilitated by poverty. In that connection, we call on all parties to the conflict to undertake the necessary measures to uphold the obligations to ensure the safety, security and well-being of all children in the country.

We must emphasize that the international community's support is especially vital to the success of this long-term endeavour. To that end, we call for continuing and strengthened cooperation between the Government and the United Nations, particularly with UNAMA and the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as among bilateral and other multilateral partners and stakeholders.

In conclusion, Malaysia reiterates its firm support for the reconciliation and the reintegration efforts undertaken by the Afghan Government to provide a secure future for all Afghans and to end violent extremism and terrorist groups' activities.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I would like to join other delegations in expressing our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Haysom, for his briefing and dedicated service as Head of the United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We wish him every success in his future assignment.

While Ukraine aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union later today, I would like to add our voice to the sincerest condolences to the people and Government of Afghanistan, as well as those of Nepal and India, with regard to yesterday's heinous terrorist attacks in Kabul and Badakhshan.

We would like to note some important progress made by the Government of Afghanistan in stabilizing the political situation in the country since our last meeting on this subject (see S/PV.7645). The assignment of candidates to fill key Government positions in the security sector, obtaining their approval by the National Assembly, the promotion of legislative reforms on elections, and the fight against corruption and terrorism are all welcome developments.

Yet, we are concerned that the preparations for the long-awaited parliamentary and district council elections, scheduled for October, are being hampered by disagreements over the electoral process and by the ambiguity over the appointment of the leadership of electoral management bodies. If the current political impasse and security threats posed by terrorist groups are used as an excuse for postponing the polls, the prolonged delay will cause further fragmentation among political elites in Afghanistan and overshadow the legitimacy of the legislature.

To ensure the country's economic growth, in our view the Government should focus attention on addressing the fiscal gap, poverty and unemployment, as stipulated in the Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. Cooperation with relevant international financial and trade organizations should also be carried out in order to further the implementation of the Government's economic reform agenda.

We regret that the efforts of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group have not resulted in real prospects for moving forward a national reconciliation process and organizing direct peace talks between the Taliban factions and Afghan Government representatives. To an even greater extent, the ongoing insurgency campaign of various terrorist and violent extremist groups continues to adversely affect Afghanistan's political, economic and security stability.

The annual Taliban spring offensive, followed by a range of deadly terrorist attacks, have shocked the world with the number of fatalities. In that regard, we praise the courage of the Afghan nation in withstanding that terrorist threat and preventing the insurgency from widening its geographical reach. We call on the United Nations and the whole international community to continue to support Afghanistan in those endeavours, including by strengthening its counter-terrorism capacities.

We also welcome the efforts of Afghanistan's international partners to combat the Taliban, in particular the elimination on 21 May this year of its leader, Mullah Akhtar Mansour. However, the swift election of Mansour's successor, Haibatullah Akhundzada, and his deputies, who have strong connections with Al-Qaida through the Haqqani network, have demonstrated the resilience of the Taliban threat. Some experts heralded a decline in hostilities while the new Taliban leadership seeks pledges of allegiance with field commanders, yet there is a danger of an intensification of the insurgency as those commanders try to expand their influence and support base in order to bargain with Akhundzada for privileges. It is also alarming that the new Taliban leader has never appeared on the relevant United Nations sanctions list. Here, we agree with those who call for this omission to be corrected without any delay. Ukraine would also like to reiterate its call on members of the international community with a degree of influence on the Taliban to persuade its leadership to finally renounce aggression against the Afghan nation and earnestly participate in peace negotiations.

The protection of civilians in Afghanistan has become an increasingly complex challenge, particularly in the light of the ongoing Taliban offensive. The ever-growing numbers of casualties, especially among women and children, and the displacement rates of those forced to abandon their homes and seek refuge, warrant our close attention. Another part of that problem is the protection of humanitarian, medical and health-care

facilities in situations of armed conflict. Last month, the Security Council sent a strong message concerning this pressing issue by adopting resolution 2286 (2016).

However, as pointed out in the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2016/532), health and humanitarian institutions of the United Nations, international and non-governmental organizations, including those carrying out demining activities, continue to be subjected to arbitrary searches, threats, looting and abductions by all parties to the conflict. That constitutes a blatant violation of international humanitarian law.

We are deeply concerned by these facts and call on all sides to follow both the legal and fundamental moral obligations to protect civilians in armed conflict and to ensure their unimpeded access to humanitarian aid. We also call on the Government of Afghanistan to systematically investigate, with the support of UNAMA, all such violations and bring those responsible to justice.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to begin by condemning the recent terrorist attacks that occurred on 20 June in Kabul and Badakhshan, which caused loss of life and injuries. We extend our solidarity to the people and the Government of Afghanistan and we convey our condolences to the families of the victims of such a terrible terrorist attack.

We would like to thank Mr. Nicholas Hayson, Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his commendable efforts to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan in his capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General. As this is his last briefing to the Security Council in his capacity as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMA, we would like to wish him every success in his future endeavours. We would also like to express our support to Ambassador Tadamichi Yamamoto, who will take over the leadership of UNAMA. We also express our gratitude to the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, our friend Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal, for his statement.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is following with concern the sensitive political and security situation in Afghanistan, which continues to pose major challenges to that country. The dialogue process with the Taliban insurgency has been seriously impacted by the armed group's refusal to participate in the peace talks and by foreign interference. It is essential to create a favourable political environment for carrying out the agenda for change proposed by President Ashraf Ghani, with the participation of all actors in Afghan society and as an Afghan-led process free of foreign interference.

In that context, the strengthening of dialogue and mutual trust among all parties is essential to consolidate peace. It is therefore necessary to redouble efforts along those lines with the support of the international community. Of special interest are the peace agreements reached by the Afghan authorities and the Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin. The agreements are a positive sign that other opposition groups might engage in similar initiatives with the Afghan authorities, thereby paving the way for national reconciliation.

Venezuela reiterates its call on the Taliban insurgency to decisively join the peace talks. We support what was said by the Secretary-General, who noted that direct negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan Government are key to that process. In that regard, we appreciate the positive role that has been played by the Quadrilateral Coordination Group, which includes Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and the United States, in support of the national peace and reconciliation dialogue between the Afghan Government and Taliban.

The security situation has been negatively impacted by the Taliban's continued military operations. In that regard, we note with concern the increase in the number of armed clashes in 2016, with the east and south-east regions being the most affected. According to the report (S/2016/532) of the Secretary-General, the year 2016 is showing higher rates of violence than those of June 2014.

Afghanistan has also been destabilized by the presence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), whose cells, according to the report (S/2016/92) of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2253 (2015), are located in southern and western Afghanistan. Over 1,000 foreign terrorist fighters are operating in the country. That is why ISIS and other terrorist groups pose a serious threat to peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region and must be fought within the framework of international cooperation.

At the political level, we recognize the recent advances in the strengthening of Afghanistan's institutions following the appointment of officials

to high-level positions in the Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Defence. Similarly, we welcome the initiative and commitment of President Ghani on holding parliamentary and district elections in October, with UNAMA's assistance. In that regard, Venezuela highlights the constructive work carried out by UNAMA in coordination with the Government. The role of the Mission has been crucial to the promotion of peace, national reconciliation, regional cooperation and economic and social development. We extend our thanks to the Mission and commend the efforts it undertakes for the reconstruction of the country.

In the area of the political empowerment of women within the framework of resolution 1325 (2000), we emphasize the interaction between UNAMA and the Ministry of Women of Afghanistan to strengthen women's protection services and eradicate violence against women. The opening of 23 centres to address this issue demonstrates the Afghan Government's commitment in this area. We encourage it to continue working in that direction.

Our country hopes that dialogue and cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan will be strengthened in order to contribute to stability in the region. The political clashes between the two nations must be overcome for the benefit of their peoples. The shared challenges in the political, economic and security fields call for greater understanding by the authorities of the two countries in order to overcome mistrust and the problems affecting them. We welcome the strengthening of regional cooperation among Afghanistan, India and Iran, which has been seen in the signing of the trilateral transport and transit agreement, which will facilitate trade among the three countries and the countries of Central Asia. The ongoing high-level visits to the country from its neighbours are a clear indication of this trend towards dialogue and solving problems of common interest within the region itself.

The Brussels international conference for the development of Afghanistan, to be held in October, is vital for the promotion of stability, security and economic and social development of the nation. We therefore urge the international community to continue supporting the people and the Government of Afghanistan by providing resources and capacity-building to promote its comprehensive development. It is worth noting that improving the country's security situation will have a positive impact on political, economic and social dynamics.

Drug trafficking continues to pose serious threats to peace and stability in Afghanistan, while also being a public health problem with serious consequences for the Afghan people. As indicated in the report, 7 per cent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product comes from drug trafficking. While there has been a decrease in the overall value of opium cultivation, the Taliban insurgency continues to use illegal drug trafficking to finance their terrorist activities. In that regard, we recognize the efforts undertaken by the Government in this area, which has received assistance from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We reiterate that an effective fight against drugs requires international cooperation, including among neighbouring countries, to prevent, combat and eliminate this scourge.

The armed conflict in Afghanistan continues to impact civilians, who are the main victims of the armed clashes between the parties. According to the report, 600 people were killed and 1,373 were injured during the reporting period, which reflects a 2 per cent increase. The report submitted by UNAMA acknowledges that women and children are the most affected by the spiralling violence. In 2015, there was a 37 per cent increase in fatalities among women and a 34 per cent increase among children. Similarly, we express our concern about the detention of children on charges of associating with armed groups.

Finally, we encourage the Government of Afghanistan to continue its efforts to promote a comprehensive and inclusive political process leading to the establishment of a strong and lasting peace, to make progress in gaining control of its entire territory and resources, to strengthen the State and its institutions to the benefit of its people, who have been affected by so many years of war and violence.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, let me thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for the work he has carried out during the nearly five years of his mandate with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), as well as the commitment with which he has carried out the difficult task that was entrusted to him.

Uruguay underscores the press statement adopted today by the Security Council condemning in the strongest terms the terrorist attacks in that took place yesterday in Afghanistan. We reiterate our solidarity with the families of the victims.

Uruguay remains concerned at the situation in Afghanistan. The country continues to face increasing difficulties in a context characterized by a deteriorating security situation, a renewed offensive by the Taliban, an upswing in internal political tensions and sluggish rates of economic growth. All of this comes despite the efforts made by the National Unity Government, the countries of the region and the international community.

Against that backdrop, we would like to reiterate once again our support for the work being carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and we call on the Mission and the National Unity Government to work more closely together, guided by the spirit of national leadership and ownership, bearing in mind the fact that there remain major challenges to the reconstruction and stabilization of the country.

On a similar note, we support the work being done by the Quadrilateral Coordination Group and the commitment of its member States to the peace process. It is our hope that this mechanism will continue to maintain its relevance through the inclusion, as soon as possible, of all actors involved in the peace talks. It is vital that efforts continue to be made to promote direct talks between the Government and the Taliban at the earliest possible time.

Likewise, Uruguay would like to express its support for the swift ratification of the peace agreement signed a month ago between the Government of Afghanistan and the Hezb-i-Islami group, which would represent a significant step towards decreasing the level of violence and instability in the country.

By the same token, we deem crucial the strengthening of Afghanistan's institutional apparatus. Similarly, it is necessary for the National Unity Government to continue to strengthen its commitment to introducing electoral reforms, which would make it possible to ensure that the elections scheduled for this year take place in a democratic and transparent manner and that the necessary guarantees are in place.

Uruguay urges the Afghan authorities to continue to adopt anti-corruption measures at the public administration level and to fill vacant Cabinet seats. Such steps would allow us to provide greater stability to a political scene that is characterized by a ramping up of the insurgency and the proliferation of the political opposition.

Uruguay is particularly concerned at the consequences of the existing instability for the civilian population, which has also had very damaging effects by preventing thousands of children from accessing health-care services and from going to school. We are concerned also at what was stated in the UNAMA communiqué of 2 June about the wave of abductions, hostage-taking incidents and summary executions of civilians that have taken place over the past few weeks.

I cannot but stress that the humanitarian situation has deteriorated as a direct result of the increase in the number of displaced persons, whose very survival is at risk as a consequence of the insecurity resulting from the conflict, against the backdrop of an operational environment that has made it increasingly difficult for the humanitarian actors that are working on the ground.

In that context, and bearing in mind that, according to the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/532), civilians have been the victims of both opposition elements and attacks carried out by Government forces, Uruguay believes that there is an imperative need for all parties to abide by their obligations under international law, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

On a similar note, we appeal for full compliance with the provisions of resolution 2286 (2016), on the protection of hospitals and humanitarian staff engaged in medical duties in situations of armed conflict, taking into account their inviolable status as well as the importance of the provision of health-care services for the civilian population.

Overcoming, over the long term, the prevailing situation of instability and insecurity in Afghanistan will depend to a large extent on the success achieved in taking firm strides towards a lasting peace. To do so, is essential that sustained support continue to be provided to the efforts undertaken by Afghanistan to alleviate the humanitarian situation, consolidate the political transition and promote economic activity and the holistic development of Afghanistan.

In conclusion, Uruguay condemns all use of violence against the civilian population and is alarmed at the activities carried out by the Taliban and groups associated with the Islamic State, which have taken the lives of innocent and defenceless civilians. Against that backdrop, we deem it crucial to step up the fight against terrorism in the region, particularly through the adoption of more robust measures targeting their

sources of funding, which are often closely linked to the high levels of illicit drug trafficking in the country.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of France.

Allow me to begin by warmly thanking Nicholas Haysom and Ambassador Saikal for being with us today and for their respective briefings. I should like in advance to align myself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union and to make three comments.

I should first like to welcome the fact that Afghanistan continues to move forward in its transition, as reflected by the continued reforms undertaken by the Government since September 2014. The recent appointments to senior Government posts and governors' posts are also to be welcomed. France reiterates its full support to the Afghan Government and encourages it to continue its efforts. I should like also to reiterate my country's commitment to cooperating with Afghanistan in the areas set out in the important Franco-Afghan Friendship and Cooperation Treaty, which has bound our two countries since 2012.

Secondly, as the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/532) points out, the circumstances remain difficult and the challenges manifold. Beyond the need to sustain political and economic reforms, the priority continues to be ending the fighting and re-establishing lasting security. The recent attacks, particularly that of yesterday and the one carried out on 19 April last in Kabul, which left 64 people dead and 327 wounded, show that the situation remains fragile. On behalf of France, I wish to express once again our deep condolences in connection with these tragic events and to pay tribute to the courage and resilience of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, which, in addition to the Taliban, must also deal with the challenge caused by terrorist groups affiliated with Da'esh.

The refusal by the Taliban to respond to the offer of direct talks with the Afghan Government made by the Quadrilateral Coordination Group on Afghanistan is of course a disappointment for the international community. It can only continue to pointlessly prolong the violence and the suffering of the Afghan people. Frances hopes that the dialogue can resume as soon as possible so as to put an end to the conflict and move towards national reconciliation. France also calls upon all countries of the region to actively support the stabilization of Afghanistan and to contribute positively to the establishment of lasting peace in the country. In that context, prospects for an economic opening towards Central Asia and Iran are positive.

The illicit economy, corruption and the production and trafficking of drugs must be actively combated by Afghanistan and its regional partners, because these are also major obstacles to the re-establishment of security in and the development of the country.

Thirdly, and finally, this fragile context makes the international community's support for Afghanistan even more important in order to help the country make progress towards greater stability, prosperity and democracy. The support of the United Nations in particular remains crucial, particularly in the provision to the population of basic services and international assistance.

France is particularly committed to UNAMA's good-offices role. Resolution 2274 (2016), adopted in March, allowed the international community to reassert its determination to maintain its support for Afghanistan. It is essential that the United Nations continue to have the resources necessary to achieve the objectives set out in the resolution. The NATO Summit, to be held in Warsaw on 8 and 9 July, and the Brussels conference on Afghanistan, to be held on 5 October, must reaffirm the international community's support to Afghanistan and the process that led to the National Unity Government.

In conclusion, allow me again to pay tribute to the work carried out by Nicholas Haysom as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMA and to wish him much success in his future duties. France is pleased to continue to cooperate very closely with his successor, Mr. Yamamoto.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Söder (Sweden): Let me begin by joining the members of the Council in extending my sincere condolences to the peoples of Afghanistan, India and Nepal for the tragic loss of lives caused by the Taliban attack yesterday in Kabul.

Let me thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/532) and not least Special Representative Haysom for his briefing and all his endeavours. I

would also like to take this opportunity to thank him for his outstanding service in Afghanistan and to wish him very good luck in his new position. We also join others in welcoming incoming Special Representative Tadamichi Yamamoto, who will have our full support in his important mission.

Sweden aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and would like to make some additional remarks, mainly on the responsibility and role of the international community.

Together with the Afghan National Unity Government, which has our full support, the international community should continue to invest in sustainable peace in Afghanistan. Success will require addressing the root causes to achieve peace, security and development, with strong partnerships and national ownership. We know that very well, since our assistance to Afghanistan dates back more than three decades, all over the country, with a focus on education and health, women and girls.

Now we, the international community, stand before two important milestones this year: the meeting of the NATO Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, to be held in Warsaw in July, and the donor conference to be held in Brussels in October. At these conferences, the future of the international community's support to Afghanistan will be determined. Predictable and sustainable funding is a prerequisite for success. We have already declared our substantial long-term commitment, with the ambition of contributing approximately $1.2 billion during the transformation decade, 2015-2024. We encourage all countries that have been engaged in the region, and the wider international community, to stay committed and to join us in this long-term approach. Sustained assistance to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces is also needed. Sweden participates proudly in the Resolute Support Mission.

The continued implementation of essential reforms, as stipulated in the Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework, is necessary. Respect for the Afghan Constitution is key, and we encourage the Afghan Government to continue reaching out to a broad political base. Additional measures to counter corruption and the illicit economy are particularly important. All of these are critical to building a viable democratic society and increasing confidence in the Afghan State.

As we have heard, today security remains a basic and serious concern. We are particularly disturbed by the high number of civilian casualties and internally displaced persons recorded in 2015, and by the fact that the situation persists. The humanitarian situation in the country continues to present serious challenges and, as always, women and children are the most affected. All actors need to make sure that civilians are afforded protection in accordance with international humanitarian law.

We all long for a peaceful solution to the conflict. Therefore, we welcome the efforts made so far throughout the year, most notably the work conducted by Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States in the Quadrilateral Coordination Group, and the clear ambition of President Ghani and the Afghan Government to invite the Taliban to the negotiating table. We encourage the Government to continue on this constructive path. We of course stand ready to support the process if called upon.

The sustained engagement of the countries of the region is also essential. A conducive regional environment is very much needed. We are particularly pleased by the formation of a new High Peace Council and by the fact that several women are included in the new structures, including as a Deputy Chair. We strongly believe that women's inclusion in a potential peace process will greatly enhance the likelihood of a successful outcome.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) continues to play a crucial role in supporting the Afghan Government. Moreover, the Mission and its leadership have been decisive to efforts for peace, stability and development in the country, as well as an important facilitator of dialogue and discussion within the international community. We support the important role of UNAMA with regard to humanitarian access, the promotion of human rights and in providing good offices in support of the peace process. UNAMA will remain essential to the international engagement in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future.

Let us recognize that much progress has been made in Afghanistan in the past decade, yet the challenges require our continued attention and we must take a long-term approach. As I said earlier, we have provided

assistance for a very long time — indeed, many decades. The Afghan Government and people can certainly count on Sweden's ongoing support in their quest for a peaceful and more prosperous future. The international community cannot afford to forget about Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy.

Mr. Amendola (Italy): Allow me first, on the occasion of his last briefing in his current capacity, to join others in their unanimous expressions of appreciation and gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom for his outstanding work and passionate commitment as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) during a delicate period in the history of Afghanistan. Of course, we give our support the new Special Representative Yamamoto. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2016/532).

Italy aligns itself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union and wishes to add the following remarks in its national capacity.

As the Afghan Ambassador has already underlined, Afghanistan's security and stability are still under threat from the ongoing violent attacks of the Taliban and other hostile insurgent groups. We condemn in the firmest possible terms those barbaric acts, such as yesterday's attacks in Kabul and in Badakhshan. An unprecedented number of civilian casualties in the conflict have been documented by UNAMA, with nearly 2,000 civilian victims in the first quarter of 2016 alone. It is particularly worrying that children represent almost one-third of all victims.

Internally displaced people and flows of Afghan migrants have considerably increased, also as a result of the precarious economic scenario. Against that challenging backdrop, I wish to reiterate the full Italian support for the efforts of the Afghan National Unity Government towards peace and stability and to defend the gains achieved in Afghanistan in the past 15 years in terms of democracy, basic freedoms, human rights and women and girls' education.

The purpose of Italy's participation, as a framework nation for the Western region, in the Resolute Support Mission is to provide training and assistance to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces together with NATO members and other partners. The security forces are carrying out their task to protect their country and its people with great courage and sacrifice.

A long-lasting peace in Afghanistan will hardly be sustainable without a political solution. To that end, effective collaboration among all regional players is pivotal. Terrorism is a global and destabilizing threat. We therefore support all diplomatic efforts, such as those undertaken by the Quadrilateral Coordination Group, aimed at creating the conditions for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, by engaging neighbouring countries and establishing constructive dialogue.

That process cannot stop, because a failure in the peace process could endanger the achievements gained over the years in the sphere of human, civil and social rights, particularly for women and girls — as has been stated already — reflected in the Afghan Constitution. That is one of the pillars of Afghanistan's democratic growth and partnership with the international community. We also encourage and support initiatives for interconnectivity, trade and infrastructure projects aimed at fostering economic integration and cooperation in the region, which would significantly contribute to the development and prosperity of the region as a whole.

Afghanistan is the first beneficiary of Italy's development aid, and reducing the country's structural connectivity gaps represents one of the main goals of our cooperation. This is the first priority of our effort in a Mission that is the second-largest in terms of foreign contingents.

The Afghan Government has started a reform process that we support. It is fundamental to Afghanistan's democratic consolidation and self-reliance. Progress in sectors such as the rule of law, the fight against corruption, economic governance, electoral reform and respect for human rights, women's rights and women's empowerment is essential. We therefore commend the Government's determination and commitment to reform and the encouraging results obtained, such as increased fiscal revenues, key appointments and new measures to fight corruption. We look forward to further tangible achievements based on mutual accountability principles.

As we approach the Brussels conference on Afghanistan in October, further progress in the Afghan Government's reform and governance agenda, combined with the sustained support of the international

community, will be key to ensuring sustainable growth and prosperity for Afghanistan and its people. As Nicholas Haysom said, peace is not a luxury, but a necessity. I think, as we all think, that we must advance on that path.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Thoms (Germany): Let me begin by thanking Mr. Nicholas Haysom for his briefing and for his outstanding leadership at the helm of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). During his tenure as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and prior to that as Deputy Special Representative, he has played a key role in bringing the international community together to support Afghanistan, especially at pivotal moments such as the latest presidential elections.

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Germany is committed to continuing its support for Afghanistan, together with its international partners and in close cooperation with the Afghan Government. Under the chairmanship of our Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, the International Contact Group reaffirmed this support at its most recent meeting, held in Istanbul on 5 June. Afghanistan in turn needs to make substantial progress on the agreed reforms before the Brussels conference in October.

The implementation of electoral and economic reforms, as well as the fight against corruption, are at the heart of the Mutual Accountability Framework. The Afghan people and international community deserve to see tangible results in these areas: reforms to bolster the private sector, the creation of job opportunities and a clear and realistic timetable for electoral reform and parliamentary elections, which also need to be communicated to the Afghan people.

All actors in the Afghan political system bear a responsibility to implement the reforms, as the National Unity Government enters its third year in office this fall. In that context, we commend yesterday's decisions by the Afghan Parliament to confirm the appointments of Acting Director Muhammed Masoom Stanekzai and Minister of Defence Abdullah Khan Habibi. Those decisions send out an important signal of national unity. Visible progress on the political and economic reform agenda is the only ground on which to justify to donor constituencies the exceptional level of support to Afghanistan.

The need for economic and political reform brings me directly to my second point — migration. Afghan migrants were the second-largest group of asylum seekers in Germany in 2015. Overall, the German authorities registered around 154,000 Afghans last year. This is a cause of grave concern to us also in light of our long-standing effort to help stabilize Afghanistan. Since the start of this year, another 38,000 Afghan nationals have arrived in Germany. In this situation, it is crucial to make quick progress in reducing migratory flows. It is in our joint interest that young Afghans can see a future in their own country. We note Afghanistan's commitment to honouring its international obligation to readmit nationals who are not in need of international protection.

An inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process remains the only viable path to a sustainable solution of the conflict. There is no exclusively military solution. Although talks with the Taliban remain elusive, there is much that Afghanistan and its partners can do to lay the groundwork. It is absolutely crucial that doors remain open. In that regard, we support all efforts of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group and others.

In our view, progress will be possible only if all key stakeholders in peace in Afghanistan, especially the countries of the region, unite around basic common positions and the joint endeavour. Negotiations with Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin are a welcome development, and a successful outcome would send a strong positive message.

We are highly concerned by the high toll that the conflict continues to take on Afghan civilians after the record number of civilian casualties registered last year. Children suffer particularly from the continued brutality of the conflict. As the Secretary-General notes in his recent report on children and armed conflict (S/2016/360), the number of children killed or maimed in Afghanistan rose by 14 per cent last year — an abhorrent and highly worrisome development. While the vast majority of those casualties are caused by non-State actors, the Government can do more to protect children as well. We are encouraged by the Government's proactive engagement with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; at the same time, there is an urgent need to implement the agreed commitments.

Another area in which we hope to see more progress before Brussels is women, peace and security. The adoption last year of the national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), and the recent symposium on Afghan women's empowerment in Kabul, sent the positive message that women have made great strides in Afghanistan over the past few years as parliamentarians, doctors or businesswomen. But again, implementation of the national action plan is key; for instance, Germany hopes to see, as agreed, the swift roll-out of prosecution units specialized on violence against women and girls in 26 provinces this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank UNAMA and Nicholas Haysom personally for their excellent work in the area of human rights, especially in the monitoring of violations against children in the Afghan conflict.

Germany joins all of Afghanistan's friends and partners in sending the clear message that we will not abandon Afghanistan at this critical time. Germany remains committed to supporting Afghanistan, in close cooperation with the Afghan Government and our international partners.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): I thank you, Sir, for organizing today's debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom for his briefing, which I understand is perhaps his last in his present capacity. We wish him luck in his future endeavours.

We express our appreciation for the important statement made by Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal of Afghanistan. We offer our sincere condolences over the loss of lives and property in the bomb attack on 20 June in Kabul, in which some 20 people — not only brave Afghans, but also Nepalese and Indians — lost their lives.

While there has been no dearth of effort on the part of the Government and people of Afghanistan, as well as the international community, we note that the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated. Since the beginning of the year, the Taliban have continued attacks at an unprecedented rate, and there is ongoing violence by other armed groups. As per the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/532), armed clashes increased this year as compared with the same period in 2015. This situation has put renewed focus on the need for enhanced engagement and action by the international community. The Security Council needs to look into the deteriorating security situation and the means to contain it, as it could pose serious threats to the gains made by the people of Afghanistan in the past 15 years.

Groups and individuals that perpetrate violence against the people and the Government of Afghanistan cannot have safe havens and should not be allowed to exercise control and wield influence over any part of Afghanistan's territory. In our view, that is critical for lasting peace in the country. The effective implementation of the Security Council sanctions regime, including that established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), concerning the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals groups undertakings and entities, should also be carried out consistently and with perseverance for it to serve as a strong deterrent to the listed entities and individuals. Also, it is sheer folly that the leader of a proscribed entity is not yet designated as a terrorist individual. As pointed out by the Representative of New Zealand, we need to address that matter forthwith.

Afghanistan has our full support in strengthening its defence capabilities to preserve its unity and territorial integrity, as that is the most important antidote to the worsening security situation in the country. On 4 June, the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi, and the President of Afghanistan, Mr. Ashraf Ghani, inaugurated the Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam. As Prime Minister Modi mentioned then, "India's capacity may be limited, but our commitment to Afghanistan is without limits."

On 23 May, India, Afghanistan and Iran also signed the Chahbahar trade and transit agreement, which we hope will provide a new path to prosperity and reliable access to Afghanistan.

We are strongly committed to supporting Afghanistan in various plurilateral and multilateral forums. India looks forward to hosting the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in December. We welcome the cooperation of participating countries as well as supporting countries and organizations for the Ministerial Conference and related events in the

political, security, economic, connectivity and cultural spheres, to be organized in the run-up to the Conference.

We believe that the path to reconciliation in Afghanistan should be through an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process that respects the red lines drawn by the people of Afghanistan and the international community, especially the ones regarding giving up violence and abiding by the Constitution of Afghanistan. The ideas and philosophy of understanding and reconciliation have deep and ancient roots there. I am reminded of a famous son of the Balkh region — the Sufi poet Rumi — who as far back as in the thirteenth century said, "I always thought that I was me — but no, I was you, and never knew it".

We applaud the role of UNAMA in providing assistance in the various sectors of Afghanistan's transformation decade.

I conclude by recalling the words of Prime Minister Modi when he said that for many others their commitment may have a sunset clause, but India's relationship with Afghanistan was timeless. We would like to reiterate our strong commitment and faith in the will of the brave people and the Government of Afghanistan to have a peaceful, prosperous, united, inclusive and democratic nation.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/532) and Special Representative Nicholas Haysom for his briefing. We wish him Godspeed in his future endeavours.

At the start, let me condemn the attacks in Kabul and Badakshan.

Also, at the very outset, I reject the unjustified, untrue and gratuitous comments made by the representative of Afghanistan in casting uncalled-for aspersions on my country and its State institutions. The international community is well aware of, and acknowledges, Pakistan's contribution to and sacrifices in countering violent extremism and terrorism.

This is indeed a sombre moment for the people of Afghanistan, for the region and for the international community, which has invested so much blood and treasure to restore peace and stability in Afghanistan. The Secretary-General's report observes that there has been no significant improvement in the political, security and economic situation in Afghanistan. On the contrary, attacks by insurgent groups have intensified, economic opportunity is absent, the reconciliation process is frozen, hopes for peace are waning, and the confluence of those factors has magnified the suffering of the people of Afghanistan and the threat to regional peace and security. The Warsaw Summit and the Brussels conference will be further opportunities for the international community to provide the support that Afghanistan obviously needs to overcome those multiple challenges to peace and development. Yet, ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Afghan Government to deliver on the commitments to its own people.

In his report, the Secretary-General expresses and reinforces the firm international consensus that only by a negotiated political agreement will Afghans achieve sustainable peace. That is precisely what my country has long proposed as the only course to end the decades of war and suffering in Afghanistan. Based on that belief in a negotiated peace, and in response to repeated requests from President Ashraf Ghani, Pakistan agreed to facilitate the first-ever direct peace talks between the Afghan Government and the Afghan Taliban in Murree in June 2015. That was a promising start to a process aimed at ending Afghanistan's long night of conflict. Unfortunately, days before the second round, in which the two sides were to also consider a de-escalation of violence, the talks were scuttled by developments that are well known.

Another period of concerted efforts led to the establishment of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group in December 2015 in Islamabad, by which Afghanistan, the United States, China and Pakistan undertook to join together to provide decisive impetus to Afghanistan's peace efforts. The international community welcomed that development. The Group held five meetings in which a road map for a peace process was drawn up. In its meeting of 18 May, the Group agreed that a negotiated settlement was the most viable option. Efforts by Pakistan and others were under way for the early resumption of the peace talks. Despite posturing by both Afghan parties, a revived dialogue seemed to be within reach.

That process was destroyed by the United States drone attack of 21 May, which killed the Taliban leader, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor. Is it an accident that, in less than a year, the possibility for a negotiated peace in Afghanistan has been scuttled? The United States drone strike on our territory was a blatant violation

of Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and a blatant breach of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law. That unacceptable action also dealt a blow to the Afghan peace process and added to the intensity and complexity of the Afghan conflict. It has raised serious questions. Does the international community desire a negotiated or a military solution in Afghanistan? Is it ready to invest in war rather than peace in Afghanistan? The use of force for the past 15 years has failed to stabilize Afghanistan. Continued resort to military means will further destabilize the situation in our neighbour and in our region. Pakistan would advise against such a strategy.

Other than Afghanistan, over the past 35 years Pakistan has suffered more than any other country as a result of foreign intervention, conflict and terrorism within Afghanistan. Several thousand Pakistani civilians and security personnel have died at the hands of terrorists.

Let me make it clear what Pakistan's policies and priorities are. First and foremost, we will eliminate all terrorist threats within Pakistan. Pakistan's Operation Zarb-e-Azb is the largest and most effective anti-terrorist campaign anywhere in the world, involving over 180,000 members of our security forces. In two years, that Operation has made substantial gains in cleansing our country of terrorism. Our Operation will continue until our objectives have been accomplished; those objectives will not be fully met until the sanctuaries and safe havens of terrorists who have fled to Afghanistan have been eliminated. We urge the Government in Kabul and the international coalition there to take action against the militant Tehrik-i-Taliban elements that have sought refuge in Afghanistan.

Secondly, it is self-evident that effective border control and management are vital to preventing the move of militants across the 270-kilometre Pakistan-Afghan border. Pakistan proposed a number of border standard operating procedures to Afghanistan two years ago; they still await finalization, as does Pakistan's proposal to establish a joint border commission. Effective border management is a sovereign right of my country. Pakistan will take measures on its side of the border accordingly. It is disingenuous to characterize steps aimed at regulating the border and curbing the flow of immigrants as illegal. There is nothing — I repeat, nothing — illegal about any construction on our side of the border.

Thirdly, we have the related problem posed by the 3 million Afghani refugees who remain on my country's soil after 35 years. Our hospitality and challenges in hosting the most protracted presence of refugees anywhere in the world needs to be, at the very least, appreciated and supported by the international community. But we also expect that tangible steps will be taken for the early return of refugees to their homeland with honour and dignity.

Finally, Pakistan remains ready to support a genuine Afghan peace process, but we will not tolerate violations of Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity from any source. Those who seek a renewed recourse to military solution need to rethink the consequences of their position. Further, we would urge the Government of Afghanistan not to externalize its internal problems and blame others for its own failures and omissions.

The Quadrilateral Coordination Group remains a viable mechanism to promote a genuine peace process, but that process will have to be pursued with patience and perseverance. Success will be assured only when the Afghan parties themselves come to the conclusion that there is no military solution to the Afghan war and that peace can be achieved only through a non-conditional dialogue that will require difficult compromises on both sides.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): Let me first extend my condolences to the people and Government of Afghanistan for the loss of lives caused by the Taliban terrorist attacks in Kabul yesterday.

I would like to express my appreciation to France for organizing this debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank the Ambassador of Afghanistan for his statement, as well as Mr. Nicholas Haysom for his briefing and introduction of the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2016/532). We wish him all the best in his new assignment, and welcome Mr. Yamamoto as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

My Government is concerned over the volatile situation in Afghanistan, which continues to face major security, economic and political challenges.

The Secretary-General's report refers to "continued and intense armed clashes, which were at their highest number recorded since 2001" (*S/2016/532, para. 3*) as the lead factor contributing to the deteriorating situation in the country. Also distressing is the uncertainty over the prospects for direct talks between the Government and the Taliban. We condemn all violent attacks committed by the Taliban and all other terrorist groups, as well as any cooperation with them, which we believe would encourage them in their odious behaviour and would thus be counterproductive to establishing peace in Afghanistan. Iran reiterates its support for any Afghan-led peace process.

At the same time, the emergence of Da'esh and its offshoot, the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province, along with a spectrum of other terrorist and extremist groups, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in the north and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, are all alarming signs of more trouble in the future if we fail to properly address them now.

Today, the Afghan National Unity Government is at the forefront of fighting terrorism. The sustained support of the international community is sorely needed to shore up the Afghan Government in its fight against terrorism and extremism and to address the security, economic and political challenges that it faces. Strengthening regional cooperation with Afghanistan is a priority and a major path towards consolidating peace and security in the region. We see great potential in our economic cooperation with Afghanistan and are ready to increase bilateral cooperation, particularly on security matters and counter-narcotic efforts, developing projects and economic cooperation in the fields of infrastructure and agriculture and finding durable solutions for Afghan refugees.

During the past decade, Iran has helped Afghanistan to complete nearly 300 projects, ranging from infrastructure to human resources training and capacity-building, particularly by offering of hundreds of scholarships each year. On 23 May, the Presidents of Afghanistan and Iran and the Prime Minister of India signed the Trilateral Transport and Transit Agreement in Tehran to facilitate trade among the three countries and, potentially, Central Asia. The Agreement covers the development of the Iranian port of Chabahar, which would provide Afghanistan with access to the high sea, which would be very valuable to Afghanistan as a land-locked country and the entire region. Iran and Afghanistan are also committed to increasing their connectivity, with emphasis on the Khaf-Herat railway, the 78-mile railroad project in Farah and the second bridge over the Helmand River. A planned trilateral Afghanistan-Iran-India transit corridor is also under way.

Narcotics are a real threat to the region and beyond and should be addressed by the international community in a serious and comprehensive manner. Any increase in narcotics use is a reflection of prevailing insecurity and poverty. The strong support and commitment of international donors, Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime are essential to deter the menace of narcotics as a social health challenge and, more importantly, as a major source of income for extremist and terrorist groups.

With regard to refugees, Iran continues to participate in the work of the Tripartite Commission in order to plan for the voluntary, safe, dignified and gradual repatriation of Afghan refugees. It is very unfortunate to learn from the Secretary-General's report that 2016 represents the lowest recorded returnee rate since the establishment of the voluntary return programme in 2002, with many of the returnees choosing not to return to their areas of origin, including many who settled in urban centres. We welcome any effort to help overcome the main reintegration challenges faced by returnees and to formulate a comprehensive voluntary repatriation and reintegration strategy. Success in voluntary repatriation depends first and foremost on addressing the reasonable needs of repatriated refugees in Afghanistan, which underscores the necessity of mobilizing more international support for this purpose.

Over the past few decades, we have supported and continue to support millions of Afghan refugees, who have not been confined to camps and have had free access to Iran's job market, despite the difficulties that the country has faced. This year, 386,000 Afghan students are enrolled in our schools and universities, which represents an increase of 36,000, thanks to the Government's decision to enrol all children, regardless of their legal status. In the field of health care and medical services, Afghan refugees continue to have access to public health services in the country.

Iran continues its full support for the promotion of security, stability and comprehensive and sustainable development in Afghanistan, since we consider the security of Afghanistan to be the security of our borders

and the region. We support UNAMA and United Nations agencies in their efforts to provide development and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan through a genuine commitment on the part of the United Nations to a sustained partnership with Afghanistan, as set forth in final report of the Tripartite Review Commission on the United Nations in Afghanistan. We need to utilize the UNAMA mandate and its good offices to strengthen national institutions and capacities in priority areas requested by the Government.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): In honour of your presidency, Sir, allow me to thank you in French for the opportunity to speak at this debate on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

(*spoke in English*)

I align myself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed and thorough report (S/2016/532), Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom for his briefing, and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement. I express particular appreciation for the efforts, dedication, and commitment of Special Representative Haysom in support of the people of Afghanistan under sometimes very challenging conditions. We wish him all the best in Africa and will welcome incoming Special Representative Tadamichi Yamamoto in due course.

Let me address three issues: security, peace and the way ahead.

On security, the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan states unequivocally that the overall security situation has deteriorated since the beginning of the year. Only yesterday, as others have noted, at least 20 people were killed and many more wounded in attacks in Kabul and Badakhshan. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families, and we offer our condolences to Nepal, Canada and Afghanistan.

The increase in casualties among the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces is worrisome. I would therefore like to commend the courage of the Government and the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in their efforts to provide security to the Afghan people. The continued support of the international community, including that of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, remains necessary in view of the threat. In this context, we recall the 20 May decision of the Foreign Ministers of participating countries to extend the Resolute Support Mission beyond 2016.

With regard to the peace process, recent civilian casualties have increased. This demonstrates the urgent need for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan. Durable peace can be achieved only through Afghan-led reconciliation supported by an inclusive regional process. We therefore commend the continued commitment shown by the region to the Heart of Asia process. We welcome the fact that the Quadrilateral Coordination Group reiterated its commitment to the peace process on 18 May. The Netherlands stands ready to support reconciliation efforts if so desired.

On the way ahead, the international community has been engaged in Afghanistan, in collaboration with the Afghan Government, for over a decade. Together, we have seen some very positive results in terms of development. Service delivery of health care and education has improved drastically since 2001. Women and girls actively take part in social life, and Afghanistan has witnessed a sharp increase in girls enrolling in schools. The Government of National Unity has shown its commitment to advancing its anti-corruption agenda. The Kingdom of the Netherlands especially welcomes the creation of a high council on governance, justice and anti-corruption, and particularly the establishment of a specialized anti-corruption court. The formation of these new bodies will strengthen Afghanistan's anti-corruption investigations.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands has been a long-time partner of Afghanistan, and has contributed significantly in the fields of peace, justice and development. We remain committed to supporting Afghanistan throughout the transformation decade. In the run-up to the NATO Summit in Warsaw and the Brussels conference, the Netherlands is planning its post-2016 engagements, combining the three Ds of defence, development and diplomacy.

The Secretary-General's report notes that both the Afghan Government and the international community should sustain their attention and commitment, and work towards a better future for the people of Afghanistan. There needs to be a clear commitment on the part of the Afghan Government to implementing

the necessary reforms. The international community must offer the required support, taking into account the challenges facing Afghanistan. The Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue to cooperate with its Afghan and international partners, as agreed in the Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework. We welcome the first draft of athe new Afghan National Peace and Development Framework, which we consider to be encouraging.

In conclusion, we, the international community, have a collective responsibility for stability and development in Afghanistan. The Netherlands will remain committed to Afghanistan throughout the transformation decade, in the context of increased Afghan ownership and leadership. In this spirit, the Kingdom of the Netherlands will continue to support Afghanistan and its people as their partner for peace, justice and development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Bird (Australia): I should like to join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his report on Afghanistan (S/2016/532), the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement, and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom for his briefing. Australia is deeply grateful to Special Representative Haysom for his astute leadership, dedication and outstanding four years of service to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and Afghanistan. We wish him every success in his new role as Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan.

We also take this opportunity to welcome and congratulate Mr. Tadamichi Yamamoto on his appointment. Mr. Yamamoto has served with distinction as Deputy Special Representative, and we look forward to working with him.

Over the past three months, the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated, with armed clashes increasing in 2016. Terrorist attacks orchestrated by the Taliban have continued to inflict enormous harm. These include attacks against the media, the Government and judicial officials, killing and injuring hundreds of innocent civilians. We condemn in the strongest terms the brutal and reckless tactics of the Taliban in targeting civilians. We also express our condolences for the terrorist attacks yesterday in Kabul and Badakhshan.

The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces have proven resolute in response to sustained pressure, and we honour their sacrifices. We also extend our gratitude to United Nations personnel and the international coalition for their tireless work to support the Afghan people. Australia reaffirms its commitment to Afghanistan and to assisting in defending its people against the insurgency.

In the coming months, the international community will meet in Warsaw and then Brussels to recommit to Afghanistan and chart the way forward to the year 2020 and beyond. In Warsaw, Australia will join international partners in committing to support the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, and in Brussels we will do the same to support Afghanistan's reconstruction and development. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to use this opportunity, created by the international community's collective support, to redouble efforts to implement its reform agenda. There remains much to do, particularly in countering corruption.

We welcome the Government of Afghanistan's support for gender equality, including steps towards addressing violence against women and implementing the national action plan on resolution 1325 (2000). Full implementation of the action plan and the law on the elimination of violence against women must be priorities.

The protection of children is also paramount. We welcome the recent progress made in preventing child recruitment by the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. We urge the Government to increase the oversight of child recruitment by the Afghan Local Police and to take further steps to implement the recommendations contained in resolution 1612 (2005). We further urge the Government of Afghanistan to work pragmatically towards parliamentary and district council elections being held as soon as is practicable.

Finally, let me express Australia's appreciation for the role that UNAMA plays in guiding and coordinating international efforts in Afghanistan. We look forward to continued cooperation with UNAMA and with the Government of Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Vrailas.

Mr. Vrailas (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2016/532). I would also like to thank Special Representative Haysom for his briefing.

(*spoke in English*)

Let me start by reiterating our full support for the important continuing role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and all of the United Nations agencies in supporting the Afghan people and in coordinating the international community's assistance.

The progress achieved in Afghanistan is encouraging in many areas, but much remains to be done as progress has been uneven and remains reversible. The ongoing fragility warrants a realistic approach for the longer term and calls for the sustained and predictable support of the international community, based on the principles of mutual accountability.

As the Secretary-General highlights in his report, we have to meet important challenges, in particular in terms of the economic slowdown, with persistent high poverty rates; the struggle for political reforms, notably as regards the electoral system and a credible electoral calendar; and a security situation that remains a source of real concern.

Success will require concerted efforts, which depend on tangible progress in Afghan State-building through the continued implementation of the reform agenda of the National Unity Government; international support and sustained funding at or near current levels until 2020; increasing aid effectiveness in response to the new Afghan national peace and development framework and our lasting security partnership; and regional support for a political process towards stabilization, peace and reinforced cross-border economic cooperation.

A wait-and-see attitude is hardly an option and risks costing much more tomorrow than it might save today. The signal of our lasting, mutual engagement has real impact not only on Afghanistan but also on the wider region: on stability, on possible peace talks, on economic development and on migration.

Let me underline the need for the Afghan people, especially the youth, to be able to see a viable future in Afghanistan. In this regard, the capacity of Afghanistan's institutions to address the population's basic needs and to reduce poverty will be a determining factor. This will require the Afghan Government to promote sustainable economic, social and environmental development, including sustained job creation for women and men alike, while further improving governance, tackling drug production and trafficking, as well as further strengthening fiscal sustainability.

The first draft of the new Afghan national peace and development framework is encouraging. It is important that the framework focus also on the important issues of good governance, the rule of law, anti-corruption and human rights. Progress must be made with the new national priority programmes and the update of the Self-reliance through Mutual Accountability framework. All three are linked and will be important deliverables in the run-up to the Brussels conference, to be co-hosted by the Government of Afghanistan and the European Union in October this year.

However, even more important is to cross the threshold from policy concepts to actual implementation, despite the difficult legacy that the National Unity Government is facing. Corruption in particular is a critical challenge in this regard, and the implementation of effective anti-corruption measures is of paramount importance.

Only a stable political and economic environment will help consolidate Afghanistan's nascent democratic institutions and promote the establishment of a reliable rule-of-law framework with safeguards to respect, protect and promote human rights, in particular women's and children's rights. Significant progress in this respect has been made in recent years in Afghanistan, but much remains to be done, in particular to ensure the full enjoyment of women's and girls' rights and women's empowerment at all levels of society, which is a priority.

In this context, I would like to highlight that substantial cooperative efforts will be necessary to address large population movements and the issue of irregular migration. They represent a severe constraint

for the development of Afghanistan's society and economy, as well as a pressing challenge to the region, transit States and the EU, where Afghans remain the second-largest group of arrivals in 2015.

Irregular migration is a real political challenge, and that is why the EU has made the offer of a new political framework to address this pressing problem: the Joint Way Forward. Effective cooperation on the return and readmission by the Afghan Government of its nationals, in full respect of their fundamental rights and in accordance with international commitments and obligations, is its central element. We hope to agree on and effectively implement the Joint Way Forward as soon as possible. The EU stands ready to support its implementation through substantial reintegration assistance so as to help create a conducive environment that can offer Afghan citizens opportunities within the country.

I would also like to briefly highlight the formidable challenge that minefields still pose for security and the socioeconomic development of the population. We call for a sustained demining rhythm and commend the work of mine-action partners and the Afghan authorities.

In this crucial phase, when we are heading towards the upcoming NATO summit in Warsaw and the Brussels conference on Afghanistan in October, let me stress that we have a collective responsibility for stability and State-building in Afghanistan and the wider region. Security and sustainable development represent interconnected challenges in such a State-building process, which needs to be underpinned by genuine political support within the region. A secure, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan is vital to the peace and stability of the region as a whole. It is probably the best reason to join forces in the region, to set aside differences and to use one's respective influence with the parties to the conflict.

We need to promote a genuine and results-oriented negotiation process aimed at creating a lasting settlement that will provide the foundation for peace, security and prosperity both in Afghanistan and the wider region, and we know how important UNAMA's work is in this context. At the same time, it is imperative that any agreement not set back the rights of Afghan women and girls.

The EU encourages the multilateral efforts under way to support the Afghan Government in promoting a meaningful, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process as the only viable path towards the sustainable resolution of the conflict. It welcomes and supports the efforts undertaken by the Quadrilateral Coordination Group to create a conducive environment for such a process. Ending the armed conflict in Afghanistan is urgent and in the interest of all who seek development and stability, prosperity and peace.

Let me conclude by joining others in paying tribute to Special Representative Nicholas Haysom for his outstanding work, his personal commitment and his integrity, as well as his untiring energy in contributing to a better future for all Afghans, the sort of future that they both want and deserve. We wish him all the best for his new challenging assignment in Africa.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Vrailas for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada): I wish to express my appreciation for this opportunity to address the Security Council.

Canada thanks the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its ongoing crucial work in Afghanistan and welcomes the latest report (S/2016/532) of the Secretary-General to the Security Council. Canada is also grateful to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom for his briefing today and his years of service to advance peace, development and human rights in Afghanistan. We wish him the best as he takes up his new role.

Canada strongly condemns yesterday's terrorist attacks in Afghanistan by the Taliban, including the attack on the bus carrying security guards who protect the Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan in Kabul. I offer my sincere condolences to the families and friends of the Nepalese and Indian security guards killed, and I wish a speedy recovery to those who were injured. Many of the victims have been part of our Embassy family for years. They will be remembered for their service in the protection of the men and women at the Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan.

(*spoke in French*)

Improved security remains essential to Afghan stability today and to the achievement of its long-term economic and development goals. Afghan security forces have withstood considerable challenges as the

armed insurgency has grown across much of the country. The international community must continue to support the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in the face of this challenge. The NATO Summit in Warsaw in July will provide Canada, along with other NATO allies and partners, an opportunity to pledge continuing support to the Afghan Government and to stand against the violence and terrorism that is undermining Afghanistan's development and prosperity.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada supports an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process and calls on the Taliban to come to the table and negotiate in good faith. Canada recognizes the importance of ensuring that the peace process include meaningful participation by Afghan women and the Afghan Government's efforts to ensure such through appointments to the High Peace Council. So much has been invested by the Afghan Government and Afghan women's groups to uphold women's and girls' rights that it would be a travesty to jeopardize them through a peace that would predominantly benefit only half the population.

We are encouraged by the positive steps that Afghanistan has made in recent years to promote and protect the rights of women, including stronger legal protection from violence, greater educational opportunities and more inclusion in public and political life. Canada welcomes the Afghan Government's initiative to develop a national women's economic empowerment strategy and a national priority programme. Sustainable development cannot happen without women's full economic and civic participation. However, those gains remain fragile and Canada calls on Afghanistan to press forward with the full implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women, as well as Afghanistan's national action plan on women and peace and security.

(*spoke in French*)

The promotion and protection of human rights, especially those of women and girls, continue to be a priority for Canada's engagement in Afghanistan. Gender equality is the cornerstone of all Canadian development programming in education, health, human rights and capacity-building for Afghan humanitarian assistance actors. At the same time, Canada's development assistance investments in Afghanistan's future serve to advance the rights, security and empowerment of all Afghans.

Canada remains concerned about minority, ethnic and religious rights in Afghanistan, as well as about the safety of journalists and the ability of the Afghan media to freely report the news. Recurrent attacks against minorities by insurgents and the repeated targeting of journalists by the Taliban are of particular concern. Canada calls on the Government of Afghanistan and the armed insurgents to uphold the human rights of all, including the freedom of expression.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada stands with the Afghan people as they strive for a more secure and prosperous future. We support the Afghan Government and its people in the face of challenging circumstances and welcome Afghanistan's efforts to counter an escalating insurgency, broker peace and pursue economic and social development. We call on Afghanistan's leaders to intensify their efforts to uphold and protect all human rights, in particular the rights of women and girls, and to sustain progress towards stability and security, accountability and self-reliance.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Begeç (Turkey): We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/532), Special Representative Mr. Nicholas Haysom for his briefing and Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal for his statement.

The report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan fairly reflects our observations as well. The achievements of the past years in Afghanistan, including in the fields of security, democracy, governance, economic development and human rights, deserve to be acknowledged. Nevertheless, those achievements are not irreversible. Afghanistan continues to face challenges in all areas.

We would also like to highlight that, as observed during the official visit of Turkish Foreign Minister Mr. Çavuşoğlu to Kabul on 16 June, progress in every field is more visible. In order to maintain those achievements and to be able to build upon them, the international community's continuing support to Afghanistan during the transformation decade is of the utmost importance.

Turkey was pleased to host the International Contact Group for Afghanistan in Istanbul on 5 June. The attendance by 54 delegations at the meeting confirmed that the international community's support

for Afghanistan will continue. On the other hand, the National Unity Government continues its reform programme with a view to achieving self-reliance in the economic and security areas. At the Contact Group meeting, the participants shared the observation that the Afghan security forces are more resilient and performing better on the battlefield. However, the peace and reconciliation process remains a major challenge and should be put back on track. In that regard, the Quadrilateral Coordination Group's work needs to advance on the basis of the road map agreed by the parties.

We take this opportunity also to encourage both Afghanistan and Pakistan to continue their efforts to build confidence between them. The recent tension at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, which resulted in the loss of life, is clear testimony to the need for good neighbourly relations.

We believe that NATO's decision to continue with the current phase of the Resolute Support Mission is appropriate. We hope that the NATO Warsaw Summit and the Brussels conference on Afghanistan will show that the international partners of Afghanistan will maintain the level of their pledges.

I would like to stress that Turkey will continue to support Afghanistan's security and development efforts on bilateral levels and in multilateral platforms. We will stand by our Afghan brothers as long as our help is needed.

Before I conclude, let me join others in condemning the terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and in expressing our deepest condolences.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7723

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7723rd meeting
Wednesday, 22 June 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Shearman
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its ninth session (S/2016/115)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-18764 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its ninth session (S/2016/115)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Permanent Representative of Sweden and former Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission; and His Excellency Mr. Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of Kenya and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/115, which conttains the report of the Peacebuilding Commission on its ninth session.

I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

Mr. Skoog: I am pleased to be here today on behalf of the members of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to present the annual report of the Commission on its ninth session, as contained in document S/2016/115.

We meet during the Peacebuilding Week, at one of several timely opportunities to discuss next steps in terms of implementing the resolutions on sustaining peace, adopted almost two months ago. I look forward to the informal interactive dialogue with members of the Security Council following this briefing and to the PBC annual session tomorrow. The two groundbreaking resolutions emanating from the review of the peacebuilding architecture provide an excellent basis and strong impetus for an enhanced role of the Peacebuilding Commission, as well as a strengthened relationship with the Council.

I will now turn to the task at hand of presenting the activities and achievements of the PBC during 2015. The ninth session of the PBC coincided with the first phase of the review of the peacebuilding architecture, which inspired the work of the Commission. Over the past year, we have taken what I believe are important steps to improve the effectiveness and flexibility of the Peacebuilding Commission, striving always to further enhance the relevance of our work, broaden the scope and reach of our efforts, and improve the accountability of the Commission. This includes adopting more transparent and strategic working methods and a more flexible agenda, increasing inclusivity, improving partnerships with regional and subregional organizations, and highlighting peacebuilding needs in the Ebola recovery.

I should like to highlight three particular areas of progress from the annual report, and also pass on some reflections on how this work can be built on and leveraged in light of the review.

First, regarding the flexibility and effectiveness of the work of the Commission, during its ninth session the PBC was able to leverage the inherent flexibility of the Commission to convene regional and country-specific discussions concerning situations beyond the PBC's established agenda. The Organizational Committee had opportunities to discuss peacebuilding needs and lessons learned in several contexts, such as the peace process in Papua New Guinea, the elections in Burkina Faso and financing for peacebuilding in Somalia. Going forward, this work can and should be further expanded. In my view, there is great scope for the Commission to keep evolving in this regard. The resolutions adopted in April give the PBC a clear mandate to continue diversifying its working methods in support of sustaining peace.

Secondly, on regional issues, the Commission has over the past year moved to highlight thematic and regional issues of relevance to its work. For example, to draw attention to the peacebuilding needs within the Ebola recovery, building on the successful work of my predecessor, a the PBC Chair undertook a trip to West Africa. I am very happy that a similar visit to the region was carried out by the current Chair in the past two weeks.

Furthermore, a regional discussion on trends and threats to peacebuilding in West Africa was convened at the beginning of this year, at which Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman, Head of the Department of Political Affairs, was invited to identify conflict-prevention priorities and inform the Commission's work in the region. Again, it is encouraging that the Peacebuilding Commission is already building on what was started during previous sessions, with additional regional discussions convened at this session.

The Commission should further use the momentum from the reviews to deepen and institutionalize cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, both in the Commission as a whole and in the country-specific work. The fundamental peacebuilding and conflict-prevention work carried out in particular by the regional economic communities is something the PBC can better link with in its advocacy work and accompaniment. In a similar vein, the PBC is well placed to listen to and incorporate local perspectives and bringi such understandings and approaches to peacebuilding to the fore.

Thirdly, regarding inclusivity, few bodies at the United Nations have a mandate to interact with and draw upon the expertise of such a wide range of actors as does the Peacebuilding Commission. During the ninth session, the Commission worked to advance interaction with a more diverse group of actors. The drafting of a gender strategy for the Peacebuilding Commission was initiated, which will help the Commission to systematize the way it works on gender issues and to put the empowerment of women at the core of the work.

A special session was organized to discuss how to advance the youth, peace and security agenda and champion youth participation for sustainable peace. This is an agenda that I hope the PBC can keep on championing, building on the momentum of resolution 2250 (2015).

The convening role of the PBC should be utilized even further, as it is one of the most important tools we have to foster greater coherence in international action and to help break some of the silos and address fragmentation. This in turn is a prerequisite for our ability to support genuine national leadership and ownership in peacebuilding processes.

Beyond these three topics that I have had a chance to touch upon, there are of course many more achievements that deserve the attention of this organ, not least within the country-specific configurations of the Commission. This year is another important year for the Commission, and I am very happy to see how the Commission continues to evolve under the very able stewardship of the Kenyan Ambassador.

Before concluding, I wish to pay tribute to my fellow PBC Chairs, as well as the representatives of the countries on our agenda and all the members of the Peacebuilding Commission. It has been a productive year for the Commission, and the successful steps could not have been taken without their very active engagement and dedicated support. In similar vein, I would be remiss if I did not dedicate a special word of thanks to Assistant Secretary-General Oscar Fernandez-Taranco and his entire team at the Peacebuilding Support Office for their steadfast support throughout the ninth session and their never-ending determination to advance the peacebuilding agenda at the United Nations.

I would just add a personal remark. I should like to thank the Security Council and its members for the very good interaction that I was able to have with all of them during the past year. This is the first time that I have had the possibility to brief the Council on this topic since the adoption of resolution 2282 (2016), on sustaining peace. I should like to this opportunity to congratulate the Council on adopting the resolution, and of course express the wish that its implementation be at the forefront of the Council's agenda, because I think it could represent a sea change in how we all deal with international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Skoog for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kamau.

Mr. Kamau: Let me begin by thanking the French presidency of the Security Council for inviting the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to this briefing. The PBC takes these opportunities seriously. I also commend you, Sir, for the manner in which you have conducted the affairs of the Council.

At the outset, I wish to thank my Vice-Chairs — the Permanent Representative of Sweden, Ambassador Skoog, who is also the former Chair, and Ambassador Hahn Choonghee of the Republic of Korea — for their continued support as Vice-Chairs of the PBC. I would also like to recognize the continuing sterling work and commitment of all the configuration Chairs and the support that the PBC gets from its membership and the Peacebuilding Support Office.

Two months ago, on 27 April the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted two substantially identical resolutions — resolutions 70/262 and 2282 (2016), respectively — which, building on the excellent work done in 2015 by Ambassador Rosenthal and the Advisory Group of Experts on the peacebuilding review, recognize that sustaining peace is a shared task to be fulfilled by Governments and national stakeholders, but that it also needs sustained international attention

and assistance to countries affected by or at risk of conflict. Those resolutions emphasize, inter alia, that sustaining peace requires more coherence among the security, development, humanitarian and human rights actors of the United Nations system, as well as more coordination among General Assembly, Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The resolutions also emphasize that sustaining peace requires a comprehensive approach that looks at all stages of conflict, with a particular focus on prevention and the need to address the root causes of conflict. They call upon the Peacebuilding Commission to fulfil a number of important functions in the areas of advocacy, coordination and partnership.

During the recently completed PBC West Africa tour of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Senegal, the value of the important messages contained in these resolutions was reinforced by everything that we heard from all the stakeholders in all the countries that we visited. In my capacity as Chair, I would also like to echo Ambassador Skoog's statement that the support of the Security Council was mentioned and its contribution and commitment were recognized everywhere we went. I just want to commend the Council for that.

In view of the reaffirmed support of the General Assembly and the Security Council for the PBC, we have a unique opportunity to move forward the peacebuilding agenda. Allow me to outline key initiatives that the Commission has undertaken and our plans for the remainder of the current session.

First, with regard to the regional approach to address peacebuilding challenges and opportunities, the Commission convened two important meetings, in January and in April this year, to discuss trends and challenges to peacebuilding at the regional and subregional levels. Commission members, as well as additional countries from West Africa, heard presentations by the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations Development Programme and the Peacebuilding Support Office on the most recent developments affecting peacebuilding in that region, and discussed thematic and cross-border initiatives. Both meetings were welcomed by Member States, as they represented important opportunities to make use of the convening role of the Commission as an inclusive platform for policy discussions on matters of peace.

It is my intention to use the mandate of the Commission, updated recently with new functions, to expand this approach to other regions, starting with Central Africa and East Africa in the second half of the year. Furthermore, on the margins of the meetings of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union earlier this year, I had informal conversations with members of the Peace and Security Council, and agreed that we should pursue deeper conversations with the African Union with a possibility of undertaking a visit to Addis Ababa and, even possibly, a retreat between the PBC and the PSC.

Secondly, with regard to the role of peacebuilding in post-Ebola recovery, humanitarian crises around the world have shown themselves to be great disruptors of peace and security. They disrupt and destroy communities, sometimes causing great loss of life and at other times uprooting entire communities, resulting in the displacement of people, with the consequence of triggering migration and refugees outflows.

As a follow-up, therefore, to the important work done by the Commission during the Ebola crisis, I recently undertook a visit to West Africa, where, together with a delegation composed of Chairs and Ambassadors of countries that are on the agenda, I assessed and witnessed first hand the road to recovery from the Ebola emergency in three of the most affected countries. What we witnessed was resolute determination and success in beating back a plague that was billed to be, at the onset, one of biblical proportions. Besides the tragic loss of life of thousands of people and the horrible suffering of many more, what Ebola has done is to expose the fragility of the affected countries and compounded and set back what were already difficulty economic and peacebuilding challenges.

But I also came away from West Africa with another impression — one of Governments and people determined to not only completely eradicate Ebola from their midst, but to also turn around their countries by building their economies, integrating their societies and nurturing sustainable peace. The gratitude expressed for the support received from the international community was everywhere we visited, and in that regard, as I said earlier, I must commend the Security Council for its swift and determined response, which drew the attention of the world to the onset of the crisis two years ago and the resultant and extensive support extended to the affected regions. We came away from the mission to West Africa convinced that

the countries were on a strong path to recovery, but that the sustained support of the international community was needed. We think that this should be kept in place for the next 12 to 24 months in order to totally complete Ebola recovery efforts.

Thirdly, on the issue of partnerships, a key value of the Commission rests in its ability to engage not only with such key partners as regional and subregional organizations, but also with international financial institutions and civil society organizations. We have witnessed the important value to transition that partnerships can give to all our peacebuilding efforts. Tomorrow, the Commission will convene its third annual session to discuss the topic of transition. That meeting represents an important opportunity for the Commission to strengthen its relations with key partners.

I wish to invite all Council members to actively participate in the discussion, particularly in view of the relevance of the topic for the Council's deliberations during the formation, review and drawdown of peacekeeping operations and special political operation mandates. In that connection, I wish to thank the President of the Security Council for his decision to attend the closing session.

As stated earlier, it is my intention to further strengthen the relations between the Commission and the African Union, as the Union is one of the PBC's key strategic partners, and I plan to visit, as I said, its headquarters in the second part of the year.

Partnerships also include cooperation between the PBC, General Assembly, Security Council and the Economic and Social Commission. I therefore look forward to the informal interactive dialogue that the President of the Security Council has organized for this morning, as well as to the joint event of the Economic and Social Council and the PBC scheduled for this coming Friday. This is truly a Peacebuilding Week for what we hope, in fact, will be a historic peacebuilding year.

Fourthly, and finally, with regard to working methods, 10 years after the creation of the PBC, Member States are calling for a more effective and efficient Commission. If it is to be able to fulfil its advisory role to the General Assembly and Security Council, and ultimately assist countries affected by conflict, the PBC needs to consider diversifying its working methods to enhance its efficiency and flexibility. It is my intention to dedicate the second half of the tenth session to convening discussions in the Organizational Committee on revising the provisional rules of the procedure of the PBC and exploring options to diversify its working methods.

We need to consider going beyond the rigid mechanisms of country configurations and be ready to respond in a flexible way to any request of interested countries, in accordance with the relevant provisions, while maintaining national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding. We also need to be able to consider cross-cutting and thematic issues. Most importantly, we need to work towards a peacebuilding whose members are engaged and ready to bring forward the work of the Commission. We therefore hope that the Security Council will give its concurrence and support on all the foregoing matters that I have mentioned.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Kamau for his briefing.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7724

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7724th meeting
Thursday, 23 June 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Lamek	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle García
	Ukraine	Mr. Fesko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Meek
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Letter dated 23 May 2016 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/466)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-19095 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Letter dated 23 May 2016 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/466)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/561, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/466, which contains a letter dated 23 May 2016 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2293 (2016).

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gata Mavita wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): As your presidency of the Council is nearing its end, allow me to express the gratitude of my delegation for the skill with which you, Mr. President, have steered the Council's work during the month of June and for the competence and expertise with which you have carried out your mission. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to take the floor before the Council at this meeting devoted to the adoption of resolution 2293 (2016) on the sanctions regime for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I take this opportunity to convey once again to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to all members of the Security Council the full gratitude of the people and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for their work and the efforts of the United Nations to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country and to guarantee peace and stability there.

My delegation takes note of resolution 2293 (2016), which has just been adopted by the Council. We thank the Council for this act, which reflects once again its desire to see peace in my country further strengthened. We also thank the Council for clearly expressing in the resolution that the arms embargo does not apply to my Government. Allow my delegation, however, to comment briefly here on some points related to the resolution to which my country attaches importance, as stressed in the note verbale addressed to you, Sir, on 20 June.

My delegation does not share the views of the Council, which has seen fit to model the resolution on the provisions of resolution 2277 (2016), adopted by the Council in March. My delegation believes that, given their different contexts as reflected in their subject matter, the contents of these two resolutions should also be different. By renewing certain provisions of resolution 2277 (2016), resolution 2293 (2016) risks rekindling latent tensions in my country.

My delegation therefore feels duty-bound to draw the Council's attention to the fact that it is the United Nations organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security. It therefore bears the heavy responsibility of working for peace and preventing the outbreak of all conflicts. Thus, any discourse emanating from this organ that does not promote trust or that exacerbates tensions can have serious consequences for Member States on the ground.

In this context, Council members may not be aware of the tensions that diverse interpretations of the

provisions of resolution 2277 (2016) have created in my country, to the point where a handful of politicians, clinging to those provisions, have called into question the convening of the political dialogue that we have all sought to help organize peaceful elections in my country and thereby to prevent the recurrence of the violence that marred the 2006 and 2011 elections. That is why my delegation had hoped that today's resolution, which has no connection to the elections, would not refer to that issue. Because our opinion has not been taken into account and the resolution does touch on this issue, my delegation should like to say a word in that regard.

As the presidential elections and respect for the constitutional timetable for their organization are issues of concern to the Council, it is necessary to clarify that on 18 April the political parties of the presidential majority, torn between various interpretations of article 70 of our Constitution, turned to the Constitutional Court, which is vested with the power to interpret legal texts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to seek the correct interpretation of the article, which reads as follows:

> "The President of the Republic is elected by direct universal suffrage for a term of five years which is renewable only once. At the end of his term, the President stays in office until the President-Elect effectively assumes his functions."

After analysing this provision, the Court issued its opinion that at the end of his mandate, the President of the Republic holds office until the effective installation of the President-Elect. This interpretation removes any ambiguity and dispels any misunderstanding among all those who had claimed that there would be a vacancy in the presidency of the Republic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo if the presidential election were not held by the end of this year.

My delegation wishes to emphasize that our insistence on the importance that my country attaches to the organization of peaceful elections in order to safeguard peace and stability should not be interpreted as an excuse to delay the elections. The experience of the previous two elections requires us to establish the conditions necessary to organizing proper elections that are not marred by violence. We are convinced that the efforts of my Government, the United Nations and the international community will allow us to overcome the obstacles we face in organizing proper elections as soon as possible.

My delegation also finds it useful to note here that resolution 2293 (2016), which concerns the sanctions regime, primarily addresses security issues. In this regard, the situation of Burundian refugees who have received military training in a neighbouring country and have infiltrated the Democratic Republic of the Congo with forged Congolese voter cards, to which the Group of Experts refers in its report (S/2016466), is both a serious attack on the security of the States of the region concerned by this situation and a violation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. This situation deserves the attention of the Council, which must condemn it. The Council's failure to condemn such acts, recognized even by its own Group of Experts, and its resort to a vague formulation calling on the countries of the region to refrain from activities capable of destabilizing neighbouring countries, are unacceptable. As we indicated in March, my country, which is already suffering from a broad spectrum of crimes committed by armed groups and negative forces against its people, cannot agree to become once again the bastion of a new foreign armed group. My delegation therefore deplores the Council's passivity in this respect.

In conclusion, my delegation considers it important for the Council to treat my Government as a partner and, as such, to listen to it so as to assist it in achieving what it considers to be appropriate and right for the good of its country. That is the kind of respect that partners owe one another. In other words, to the extent possible the Council must avoid imposing its views at every opportunity. We believe that, in so doing, the United Nations will further strengthen the climate of cooperation that it has long enjoyed with my country.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7725

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7725th meeting
Thursday, 23 June 2016, 10.20 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle García
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/546)

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16-19103 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/546)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/546, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015).

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: We meet today in the shadow of Jo Cox's murder last Thursday. She was a brilliant British Member of Parliament killed in the line of public duty just days before her forty-second birthday, leaving a husband and two very young children — a loss to all of us and particularly to the innocent people of Syria, who never met her but for whom she worked relentlessly, courageously and effectively. She was a humanitarian to her core and, working with the brave local non-governmental organization the White Helmets, Jo was one of the greatest advocates for this long, destructive, senseless war to stop, and stop immediately.

That is what Afin said to me in the Reyhanli hospital near Hatay, Turkey, on the Syrian border near the Bab Al-Hawa crossing, when I was there the other day. He is a White Helmet working in Syria who had just lost his leg below the knee in an improved-explosive-device explosion and was trying to get used to his prosthesis. Jo took his message to the House of Commons and to the Security Council chamber. She joined politics to speak truth to power, fearlessly, to the Security Council; I dedicate this statement to Jo, to her values, to her inspiration, and above all, her call for peace in Syria now.

There is something fundamentally wrong in a world where attacks on hospitals and schools, on mosques and public markets, on ethnic, religious and confessional groups have become so commonplace that they cease to incite any reaction. Month after month, indeed, year after year, we have each spoken about the ending of the carnage and about the importance of justice and the need for accountability in Syria. Syrians have begged for action — Syrians such as Dr. Mazin, who, as I reported to the Council last month (see S/PV.7701), had been helping people, trying to save lives at the Al-Quds hospital, before he himself sustained grievous injuries to both his brain and abdomen; all he said from his hospital bed, after mustering the energy to speak, was, "Please, peace".

And yet the world continues to watch Syria disintegrate into bloodshed. In many parts of the country, violence continues unbridled as the parties seemingly fail to grasp that there can be no military solution to the conflict. Civilian neighbourhoods are pummelled. Medical and other health-care facilities are destroyed. Education is disrupted, and livelihoods are devastated. Would each and every one of those present here not try to flee as well?

The latest report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, issued on 16 June, notes that in the east, the terrorist organization the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has committed genocide as well as multiple crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Yazidis. The report describes the thousands of Yazidis held captive in Syria, where they are subjected to unimaginable horrors. Yazidi women continue to be sexually enslaved, and Yazidi boys are indoctrinated, trained and used in hostilities. Thousands of Yazidi men and boys are missing.

In the north-west, in Aleppo governorate, an ISIL offensive on Azaz and the surrounding area led to numerous civilian casualties, threatening up to 200,000 civilians. In addition, since the beginning of the anti-ISIL offensive in Menbij, 45,000 people have been displaced, and 65,000 others are now encircled by the Syrian Democratic Forces. Moreover, airstrikes and shelling increased on the Castello road, the only remaining access route for areas of Aleppo held by

non-State armed groups, and the adjacent villages of Anadan, Hritan, Kafr Hamra and Khan Al-Assal, risking again the complete encirclement of the area and the entrapment of more than 300,000 civilians.

Imprecise weaponry, notably the unrelenting use of barrel bombs by Government forces, has resulted in hideous loss of life. For example, in Daraya, now dubbed "Syria's capital of barrel bombs", dozens of barrel bombs have reportedly been dropped during the last few weeks alone. Much has been said about the use of these weapons, but let me repeat: their use in this manner constitutes indiscriminate attacks. Their sole purpose is to terrorize and punish the civilian population. All attacks against civilians and civilian objects, as well as the indiscriminate use of weapons in populated areas, including shelling and aerial bombardments, must end. They must end now. And before anyone tries to suggest that this is not the truth, these barrel bombs are documented facts, indisputable facts, for which, however long it takes, the decision-makers and perpetrators will be held to account one day.

This cruel conflict continues to tear families apart and inflict brutal suffering on the innocent. Just last week, at least six children were killed and tens of others injured in heinous attacks near the Sayidda Zeinab shrine, south of Damascus, as well as on a public market in Idlib. Millions more are in the line of fire, facing crushing poverty and alarming physical danger. Children have been forcibly detained; they have been tortured, subjected to sexual violence and in some cases executed. Childhoods have been lost as ISIL and some non-State armed groups have targeted children for recruitment into their forces.

How much longer will the children of Syria have to suffer like this? How much longer will we tolerate the utter disregard for the most basic precepts of humanity, the complete disrespect of international law and, indeed, the Council's resolutions? On 3 May, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2286 (2016), on the protection of the wounded and the sick, medical personnel and humanitarian personnel in armed conflict. And yet, since then, the United Nations and its partners have received reports of dozens of new attacks. Documentation from Physicians for Human Rights received in late April identified 365 attacks on 259 medical facilities, as well as the deaths of 738 medical personnel. The Syrian Government forces were reportedly responsible for at least of these 289 attacks — more than 76 per cent — resulting in an estimated 667 medical personnel killed.

Moreover, since 1 May, the United Nations and its partners have received reports of many more attacks on medical and other health-care facilities. This includes the destruction on 23 May of a hospital in Tartous, as well as the attacks on 8 June on three medical facilities in Aleppo: the Al-Bayan and the Al-Hakeem hospitals, within a distance of 300 metres, and the Abdulhadi Fares clinic, all in the eastern part of the city. Again, these are facts, all facts, undeniable facts.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to health, Dainius Pūras, recently warned that

> "medical units are being damaged and destroyed in large numbers throughout Syria, revealing what has become a repugnant hallmark of this horrific conflict. The sheer number of such facilities being hit, as well as information relating to some of the incidents, suggests that some hospitals and other medical facilities may have been directly targeted".

I am also gravely concerned about the situation at the berm along the Jordanian border, where the number of asylum seekers has increased exponentially in recent months, tripling to a current estimate of over 70,000 people. The population at the berm includes high numbers of extremely vulnerable people. Over half are children. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that the population will top 100,000 by the end of the year. Moreover, the security situation at the berm has deteriorated considerably, as was painfully illustrated on Tuesday when at least six Jordanian soldiers were killed during an attack on a nearby border guard post. This attack took place close to a waiting area for Syrians hoping to gain entry into Jordan.

Surely all of this should shake the moral conscience of the world. Surely the international community must question its humanity, when religious, ethnic and confessional communities risk eradication, when internally displaced person settlements are no longer safe from bombardment, when refugees and migrants drown in the Mediterranean by the thousands, and, to quote UNICEF, when "babies have to be taken out of incubators because of attacks on hospitals". This is obscene. This is not a world we should nor can accept.

United Nations agencies and non-governmental organization partners continue their tireless efforts

to meet the urgent humanitarian needs of the Syrian population. The June plan for humanitarian access was submitted on 19 May and sought access to 1.1 million people in 34 locations. On 2 June, an initial response was received from Syrian authorities. Of the 34 locations to which access was sought, 16 locations were granted full access, 13 were granted partial access, meaning that items such as food were not authorized or that the number of people we were authorized to deliver to was below our estimate of actual people in need, and 5 were not granted any access. Following a second round of consultations, on 6 June the previously excluded town of Al-Waer was granted partial access, and partial approvals for Darayya and Douma were expanded to include food for some beneficiaries.

With respect to besieged areas in particular, following intense negotiations at various levels for access to besieged areas requested under the June plan, the United Nations received approvals to reach 15 by land, either in full or to part of the population in need. I should also note that during the month the total number of besieged areas was revised downward, as Zabdin was retaken by the Syrian Government. This leaves a total of 18 locations besieged. The only besieged location requested but not approved under the June Plan is Al-Zabadani in Rural Damascus. Al-Zabadani is included in what is known as the Four Towns agreement and, as I stated earlier, any delivery to those towns continues to be planned and implemented under that framework. Requests for the other two besieged areas — Yarmouk and Deir ez-Zor — are not under the convoy plan but are covered by separate airdrops led by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the World Food Programme, respectively, both of which continue.

As I speak, inter-agency convoys are delivering much needed multisectoral assistance to Jirud, in Rural Damascus and Sheikh Maqsoud, a neighbourhood in the city of Aleppo, which has been the subject of constant shelling in the past months. This is the first of a multiphase delivery to bring food, nutritional items, health, hygiene and other humanitarian supplies for some 22,500 beneficiaries. On 19 June, a United Nations-Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) convoy proceeded to Kafr Batna sub-district, providing food and health assistance for 25,000 beneficiaries in two besieged locations, Ein Terma and Hamouria, as well as three hard-to-reach communities, namely Hazeh, Beit Sawa and Eftreis. On 16 June, a United Nations-SARC convoy delivered food, health, nutrition, non-food items (NFI), water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) materials, and agricultural assistance for 50,000 beneficiaries in Afrin and neighbouring towns in Aleppo Governorate. That same day, an inter-agency convoy delivered humanitarian assistance to 37,500 residents in the besieged neighbourhood of Al Waer in Homs. A follow-up convoy is planned in the coming days, pending Government approval. Together, these convoys to Al Waer will provide food, medicine, health, nutrition, WASH and emergency supplies for 75,000 people.

Earlier this month, a United Nations-SARC convoy delivered food, health, nutrition, WASH and NFI materials for 33,500 beneficiaries in Al-Dar Alkabirah, Tier Mallah and Al-Ghanto in northern Rural Homs. In addition, on 10 June, the United Nations and its partners completed the first of a multiphase delivery to bring food for 24,000 people, as well as nutrition items, health, hygiene and other humanitarian supplies for some 40,000 people in Douma. The day before, on 9 June, the United Nations and its partners delivered food, nutrition, health and medical, WASH and education assistance to Darayya as a follow-up to the 1 June convey that delivered health supplies, including vaccines and certain nutritional supplies for children. This was the first time that the United Nations and SARC were able to deliver supplies to Darayya in four years. Moreover, on 1 and 3 June, inter-agency convoys were deployed to Moadamiya to deliver food, health, nutritional supplies for 45,000 people.

Despite the continued best efforts of the United Nations and our humanitarian partners on the ground to reach all those in need in communities across Syria, the realities of the ongoing conflict and the continued interference and intransigence of the parties to the conflict present serious challenges to our ability to do so. The limitations by the Syrian authorities placed upon access in terms of where, who and how much aid can be delivered continues to make assistance to some communities quite simply a non-starter and is compounded by those same authorities then making every effort to delay, distract and dismantle convoys as we are attempting to undertake our work. Organizing the delivery of aid must remain the responsibility of the United Nations and its partners based on need; it must not be subject to political or other considerations.

We must understand that the delivery of aid is not a simple matter of pointing a truck in the right direction in the morning and hoping for the best. Security issues are a minute-by-minute concern for those on the ground organizing humanitarian convoys, trying to calculate the safest, most efficient way through a nightmarish conflict situation. This requires exceptional and brave people. In the most optimal conditions, it is a complex undertaking. In Syria, when presented with the reality of the conditions I have described today — and indeed I describe every month — during an active and volatile conflict, it is a Herculean challenge fraught with danger, conducted by these very extraordinary and brave people, whose work we must make safer, not even more dangerous, by allowing them the space to negotiate and, as I urged before, without the glare of publicity attending their every move. It is not one, however, at which, frankly, we can afford to fail. I call yet again on all with influence to continue to pressure the authorities to allow unrestricted, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access, free from interference.

Since January this year, some 844,325 people have been reached by the United Nations and its partners through inter-agency cross-line convoys. This includes 334,150 of the some 590,200 people living in besieged areas as designated by the United Nations, some more than once. While this certainly represents progress and is welcomed, it is but a trickle compared to the level of protection concerns, needs and suffering in besieged and hard-to-reach areas. Moreover, following careful review, we now estimate that some 5 million people are living in hard-to-reach areas, which is an increase of over 900,000 people from the previous estimate. This large increase is based on several factors, but primarily the inclusion of areas in parts of Aleppo, Al-Raqqa and Al-Hasakeh Governorates as a result of insecurity as well as constrained access for humanitarian actors both from within Syria and via cross-border operations.

It is therefore vital that the stuttering momentum sustained on humanitarian access over the past few months continue and improve, and be significantly expanded into the second half of this year. The key now is to turn these requests and approvals to besieged and hard-to-reach locations into full and sustained humanitarian deliveries to all Syrians in need. The team on the ground is working day and night to make this a reality, including by negotiating with the Syrian authorities to turn partial approvals into full approvals and to put an end to the removal of medical supplies, which, abominably, continues.

By the end of this month, we hope, we will have been able to reach all besieged locations. Council members may rest assured that, if given the full approvals to all areas, the United Nations and its partners do have the capacity to step up and fulfil those needs so long as the funding is flowing as cash and not just as the words of pledges. We have now also submitted the July access plan to the Syrian authorities; we did that on 19 June, requesting access to reach 1,220,750 beneficiaries in 35 besieged, hard-to-reach and crossline priority locations. This must be approved in full and without any conditions.

We also need the parties to the so-called Four Towns agreement to end the tit-for-tat so as to ensure that approved convoys can proceed and that civilians in need of medical treatment can get timely access for their health care. In order for that to happen and to ensure sustained access in the weeks and months to come, we will require the continued support of the Security Council, the International Syria Support Group and Member States. We also need to continue to support our brave non-governmental organization partners working tirelessly in besieged and hard-to-reach locations, whose ongoing programmes are absolutely vital to complement the important efforts of the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in reaching people in need.

As I have said numerous times before, we remain committed and ready to deliver aid through any possible modality, including airdrops for civilians in desperate need, whoever and wherever they are. The bottom line, however, is that the real extent of the progress cannot only be measured by ad hoc deliveries to besieged communities. The fact that dozens of barrel bombs were reportedly dropped on 20 June in Daraya — the day after the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered the first food aid to the town since November 2012 — shows that the situation for people in besieged and hard-to-reach areas will not be resolved by humanitarian aid delivery alone.

The real measure will be when these medieval sieges are no more; when boys do not risk sniper fire when bringing medicine to their mothers; when doctors can administer life-saving treatments without the fear of imminent attacks; when Yazidi girls do not have to scratch their faces out of fear of being bought and

sexually enslaved. That is the disgusting reality of life in Syria today. While the ultimate responsibility lies with the Syrian parties, future generations will judge us harshly if we have an inability of the international community to save and protect civilians in Syria.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7726

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7726th meeting
Wednesday, 29 June 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle Garcia
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 1 March to 20 May 2016 (S/2016/520)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-20001 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 1 March to 20 May 2016 (S/2016/520)

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/578, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/520, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 1 March to 20 May 2016.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2294 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): Let me begin by expressing New Zealand's sincere condolences to the people and the Government of Turkey over the attacks at the Istanbul airport.

The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) plays a critical role as a stabilizing force in an extremely troubled region. We strongly support the mission and we want to see it return to full functionality as soon as possible. Therefore, we are open to an incremental return to the area of separation, but we need to bear in mind the circumstances that led to UNDOF withdrawing in the first place.

The deteriorating security situation had generated a sustained crisis, which saw several long-standing contributing countries withdraw from the mission, and culminated in October 2014 with the kidnapping of 45 Fijian peacekeepers by armed extremist groups. These incidents were extremely damaging to UNDOF and to United Nations peacekeeping more generally. United Nations personnel were put in unacceptable situations of risk, with inadequate plans for a rapid exit. The incidents in the Golan exposed concerning flaws within the United Nations processes for assessing risk and engaging with troop-contributing countries. We need to be confident that we have changed the way we operate to ensure that such events are not allowed to happen again.

The security situation in the area of separation remains dangerous and unstable. It is a war zone in which armed extremist groups remain a real and constant threat, and the reality is that UNDOF personnel are likely to continue to be targeted. New Zealand argued strongly in the process leading up to the adoption of resolution 2294 (2016) today that, as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) takes forward its plans for an incremental return, it must be clear that any return should take place only if the necessary conditions being met to ensure that it can be done safely and effectively. It must be based on a robust assessment of the security situation, which must be kept under continuous review, and DPKO needs to keep the Council updated regularly. UNDOF personnel must also be provided with the technology and equipment necessary for them to carry out their mandate safely.

As the Secretary-General has made clear, it is essential that the parties to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement play their part in enabling the return of UNDOF, including by facilitating the establishment of secure temporary crossing procedures and enabling the mission's use of technology and equipment necessary for its safety.

In early May, New Zealand hosted a meeting for troop-contributing countries, the Secretariat and Council members as part of our triangular consultations initiative. We also engaged bilaterally with a number of the most affected troop-contributing countries in the lead-up to today's adoption. Troop-contributing countries shared our concerns about the ability of UNDOF personnel to operate safely in the area of separation. They emphasized the need for UNDOF troops to have the equipment they need to do their jobs.

New Zealand proposed a number of amendments to the draft text. We are pleased that some changes were made, even though they do not fully reflect the extent of our concerns or those conveyed to us by some troop-contributing countries. This outcome is in no small part due to the brief time we had to consider the resolution. Given the serious issues involved, particularly with regard to the safety of United Nations personnel, one working day for consultation is unacceptable.

We will continue to engage with Council members and troop-contributing countries further in the months ahead, particularly in advance of the 90-day review in September and the next UNDOF mandate renewal in December. We also encourage DPKO and those that assert the right to hold the pen on this issue to stay in close contact with troop-contributing countries as their plans advance to ensure that they retain the full confidence and support of troop-contributing countries. We trust that the next mandate renewal will allow for more time for Council members to consider the serious issues at stake.

The meeting rose at 10.15 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7727

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7727th meeting
Wednesday, 29 June 2016, 10.15 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle García
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2016/498)

Letter dated 20 June 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/550)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-20007 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Mali

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali (S/2016/498)

Letter dated 20 June 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/550)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Mali to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I warmly welcome His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and African Integration of Mali, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Bamako.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/576, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the following countries: Angola, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/498, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali. I wish also to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/550, which contains a letter dated 20 June 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2295 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to welcome Minister Dioup. I reiterate that Egypt stands ready to cooperate with Council members to provide assistance and support to the people of Mali so as to overcome the current challenges at this critical juncture of Mali's history. We will spare no effort to strengthen regional and international cooperation so as to confront the threats that are facing the people of Mali.

Resolution 2295 (2016), which we have just adopted and of which Egypt is proud to be a sponsor, takes into consideration the critical situation on the ground and the emerging and unique challenges that are facing the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Unfortunately, MINUSMA has become one of the most dangerous operations on the ground. The resolution contains numerous elements that take into consideration the situation on the ground without undermining the necessary requirements of peace operations according to agreed standards.

The resolution gives MINUSMA a balanced mandate in line with current challenges. It strengthens the capacities of Blue Helmets so as to enable them to better protect the Mission, fully discharge their mandate, including the protection of civilians, and provide the necessary assistance and support to the Malian Government and other parties so as to implement the provisions of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation.

I commend the French delegation's efforts aimed at reaching a consensus-based agreement and resolution, in the light of the shared objectives of our delegations. Indeed, the French delegation was able to close certain gaps in terms of fulfilling those objectives.

In conclusion, Egypt would once again like to stress the need to preserve our relationships with our partners in Mali in order to provide them with the international,

regional and bilateral support they require. We believe that stability in Mali is the cornerstone of peace, well-being and prosperity in the Sahel region, whose proximity to North and West Africa directly links it to the stability of the African continent in general.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation voted in favour of resolution 2295 (2016), given the importance of maintaining unanimous Security Council support for the peace process in Mali and the actions of peacekeepers in the country. In so doing, we have taken into account the aspirations of the Government of Mali, which is seeking to accelerate the stabilization of the country's northern territories. We remain concerned, however, that peacekeepers there are risking their lives as they have become targets for terrorists. We express our deepest condolences to the Governments of countries whose nationals have died in fulfilling their duties in service to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

At the same time, in the course of negotiating the text of the resolution, some delegations tried to take advantage of the situation by imposing certain ambiguous language into the MINUSMA mandate. We feel it necessary to express our concern about the vague references in the text to the level of asymmetric threats that would justify the use of force. We will leave the burden of responsibility for that imposition to the conscience of the informal coordinators of the Mali dossier, who once again have abused their position and demonstratively disregarded the views of their colleagues.

Our position is that the relative flexibility that has been given to MINUSMA — and the possibility of the use of force — means that peacekeepers still have to act on the basis of peacekeeping principles. The use of force should only be considered if a serious threat has been assessed. Erroneous strikes against civilians carry additional risks and could lead to threats to the Blue Helmets themselves, thereby endangering the peace process as a whole.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 2295 (2016) to renew the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), convinced of the importance of ensuring the continuity of the crucial work the peacekeeping operation is doing on Mali. It is clear that we have to work to improve the security conditions of the Mission, since the security of the peacekeeping personnel affects the effectiveness of the Mission in fulfilling its mandate, in force generation and in its task of protecting civilians.

MINUSMA is the peacekeeping operations that has had the sad record of the largest number of peacekeepers to have lost their lives as a result of direct attacks. Given that scenario, there can be no doubt that it must be a priority to improve the security of the personnel deployed in MINUSMA, not only in order to prevent further losses, but also for the Mission to be able to better fulfil its mandate.

The United Nations peacekeeping personnel is being deployed in increasingly complex situations. The use of terrorist tactics, also known as asymmetrical tactics, represent serious threats to the safety of civilians — and of peacekeepers, giving rise to the need for additional tools to allow them to effectively protect civilians. Now, within the need to adapt to the terrorist threat, for Uruguay, peacekeeping operations, owing to their composition and character, are not suited to engage in military counter-terrorism operations. In the cases where asymmetrical threats are present in the operational environment peacekeeping operations must of course adopt security measures, in particular to protect United Nations personnel and civilians.

Through today's resolution, the Security Council has this year allowed MINUSMA to adopt a more proactive and firmer posture in carrying out its mandate. Sub-paragraph (d) of paragraph 19, on countering asymmetrical attacks in active defence of MINUSMA's mandate, calls for engaging direct operations pursuant to serious and credible threats. In the opinion of my delegation, the proactive nature of a peacekeeping operation should not lead to preventive actions or attacks when it comes to fighting terrorism because that would be changing the nature and meaning of what a peacekeeping operation actually is.

I would very briefly like to quote the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, "the Panel believes that United Nations troops should not undertake military counter-terrorism operations" (*S/2015/446, summary*). The report continues,

> "[w]here a parallel force is engaged in offensive combat operations it is important for United Nations peacekeeping operations to maintain a clear division of labour and distinction of roles" (*ibid.*).

Likewise, the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations states,

> "[a]s the Panel rightly recognizes, United Nations peace operations are not the appropriate tool for military counter-terrorism operations" (*S/2015/682, para. 15*).

Even though Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 2295 (2016), it would like to state that we do not feel it is appropriate to mandate MINUSMA, or any other peacekeeping operation, to carry out military counter-terrorist activities or to fight asymmetrical threats.

Finally, Uruguay wishes to point out that the type of mandate adopted in today's resolution is of an extraordinary nature, given the very particular situation that MINUSMA is facing on the ground. The solution it provides does not mean that it can be transferred to other peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by expressing the condolences of the Republic of Senegal to Turkey following the terrorist attack that struck that brotherly country yesterday.

Senegal would also like to commend the efforts of the penholder of resolution 2295 (2016). We welcome and thank Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop's for participating in today's meeting.

Senegal co-sponsored and voted in favour of the resolution, as we are convinced that through it the Security Council is giving the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) a much more robust and effective mandate, in line with the wish that was clearly expressed by the States members of the Economic Community of West African States at the summit meeting held in Dakar on 4 June 2016. The Council gives MINUSMA the means to provide all necessary support to the Government of Mali in its efforts to re-establish its sovereignty throughout its territory and also in its efforts to deal with the asymmetric threats the country is facing. That is why my Government would like to thank all Council members for their cooperation, which has made it possible to produce this resolution. Senegal would also like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its full support for Mali's territorial integrity and sovereignty over its entire territory.

Senegal would also like to express its full support for the efforts of the Armed Forces of Mali to re-establish the country's sovereignty over its entire territory and combat the terrorist groups that pose a threat to all countries in the region. We therefore welcome the efforts of the Malian Government to implement the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, and take this opportunity to call on the parties to be more committed to the implementation of the agreement, particularly by providing the necessary information on cantonment and joint patrols.

Senegal remains committed and will spare no effort, as it has done until now, making every contribution to the effort to restore security and stability to this country, which is our neighbour, brethren and friend. That explains the additional effort provided by my country through the redeployment of the quick reaction force. I take this opportunity to once again call on the Security Council and the international community as a whole to spare no effort in continuing to guarantee its full support to Mali, which is in need of that support in this particularly critical period, during which it is coping with extremely serious threats that imperil not only Mali but the entire region and the world.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Japan welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2295 (2016). I would like to thank France for taking the lead in preparing this resolution. Japan is pleased to have cosponsored the resolution. One year has passed since the signing of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Japan commends all the Malian signatories, who remain committed to implementing the agreement. We must not lose momentum. In that regard, it is crucial for all Malian parties to accelerate the implementation of the agreement with renewed determination, so as not to allow spoilers to jeopardize the peace process.

Together with international partners, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) continues to support Mali in that process. As a bilateral partner, Japan also provides assistance to Mali to build the capacities of its security sector and to spread the dividends of peace throughout the entire population. Above all, allow me to underscore the fact that the principal actors in the implementation of the peace agreement are the Malians themselves. Two weeks ago, the Prime Minister of Mali, His Excellency Mr. Modibo Keita, reaffirmed before the Council that his Government was determined to expedite the successful implementation of the agreement (see S/PV.7719). Japan looks forward to the strong leadership of the Government of Mali.

Finally, Japan pays tribute to MINUSMA personnel, who work every day in severe security conditions. I would like to express my sincere condolences to those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Resolution 2295 (2016) increases the authorized number of MINUSMA troops by 20 per cent and clarifies its mandate to ensure the security of personnel. Japan strongly hopes that these measures will bring tangible results in improving the mission's security and its capacity to implement its mandate on the ground. Japan reiterates its full support for MINUSMA and for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): I would like to begin by expressing the United States' deepest condolences to the victims and the families of those killed in the heinous terrorist attack at Istanbul's international airport yesterday. We remain steadfast in our support for Turkey and all of our friends and allies as we continue to confront the scourge and threat of terrorism. The United States welcomes the Security Council's unanimous vote today to extend the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) for an additional year. This decision comes at a critical time in Mali's history and for the future of United Nations peacekeeping.

Over the past year alone in Mali, 27 MINUSMA peacekeepers have been killed. Over the past year alone, 112 have been wounded. Ten of those attacks used improvised explosive devices that targeted MINUSMA convoys. United Nations peacekeepers are increasingly being called upon to fulfil complex mandates in dangerous environments that include asymmetric threats. This requires more prompt, effective and agile responses by the United Nations system and Member States deploying or providing capabilities to successfully operate in such environments. It also requires clarity from the Security Council.

In light of the volatile security situation, particularly in central and northern Mali, the Security Council's decision to reinforce the mission's vital protection of civilians and stabilization mandate should help to rationalize the mission's posture with the prevailing security environment. The Security Council is also requesting that the Secretary-General enhance MINUSMA cooperation with regional security initiatives, such as the Sahel Group of Five, so that the Mission has greater awareness of the broader regional security dynamics in which it operates.

The Security Council took an important step today by reconciling the current MINUSMA mandate with its security environment and by calling on the Secretary-General and Member States to urgently give MINUSMA the capabilities it needs to enable the Mission's more mobile, proactive and robust posture in pursuit of its mandate. The resolution emphasizes that MINUSMA must anticipate, deter and counter threats, including asymmetric threats, to protect civilians and United Nations personnel. This means that MINUSMA must take robust and active steps, including direct operations if necessary, against serious and credible threats.

When MINUSMA is attacked or threatened as it carries out its mandate, MINUSMA is expected to act, and we are expected to ensure that MINUSMA has the ability to do so effectively. This is not ambiguous, as some have suggested; it is rational, and it is necessary when a mission is deployed in this kind of environment. It is a critical step forward for this peacekeeping mission.

Today, the Security Council also affirmed that the gradual restoration and extension of State authority across Mali — and particularly the reformed and reconstituted Malian defence and security forces — would contribute to the stability that all Malians seek. This would also help to deter the terrorist threat, which continues to claim the lives of Malian security forces and those supporting the Malian people, namely, the French forces and MINUSMA peacekeepers, to achieve the peace they have so long desired. We certainly pay tribute to their sacrifices in Mali.

The Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali was signed over a year ago, and yet today it remains largely unimplemented. Failure to move forward and to take the political risks necessary for the greater good of Mali's enduring peace creates openings for spoilers and for terrorists. While the United States is encouraged by the recent agreement among the signatories on the interim authorities, as well as by President Keita's decision to appoint a high-level representative on implementation, we continue to urge — as resolution 2295 (2016) rightly underscores — that all the signatories immediately implement the broad range of institutional, security, development and defence provisions of the agreement. Too much time has passed, patience is wearing thin, political will is dissipating and implementation is urgently necessary.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): New Zealand welcomes today's unanimous adoption of resolution 2295 (2016) and thanks the French delegation in particular for the continuing leadership it has shown on Mali, in close consultation with the African members of the Council.

We support a mandate for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) that enables troops to take robust action to defend themselves and protect civilians in a security environment characterized by asymmetric threats. The losses taken by MINUSMA over the past year have already been graphically referred to by others. We agree that troops should be enabled to undertake proactive defence by taking action to address threats to civilians and United Nations personnel in their area of operation.

We pay tribute to the high number of peacekeepers who have risked their lives and in all too many cases lost their lives in Mali. We continue to be concerned at the lack of key capabilities of the Mission to enable it to effectively carry out its mandate. We support the intent to send a clear message about how we expect the mandate to be carried out. We wish to reiterate New Zealand's view that this mandate clarifies MINUSMA's mandate and does not broaden the Mission's authorizations specifically by granting any ability to engage pre-emptively in counter-terrorism activities.

In our view, the mandate was not really the problem that needed addressing in this case. The powers of MINUSMA are clearly stated in paragraph 17: the words "all necessary means" should mean what they say. Adding complicated language around complex operational issues, such as force posture, risks exacerbating the problem of less clear mandates and may raise unhelpful implications for other mandates. As noted in the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (S/2015/446), United Nations missions currently have significant shortcomings that make them poorly suited to such rolls. Mandating such tasks to any mission would require a much greater degree of consideration and discussion in the Council.

We welcome the inclusive approach taken in the lead-up to the adoption of the resolution, and we particularly welcome the engagement with troop-contributing countries and the opportunity to discuss the situation in Mali with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in the informal interactive dialogue with the Council on 16 June.

Mr. De la Calle García (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain welcomes the adoption of resolution 2295 (2016), which it co-sponsored. The resolution is the Security Council's response to the unanimous request received from the Government, the signatory parties of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, civil society, troop-contributing countries and the political stakeholders during the Council's visit to Mali in March. It is a request for the strengthening of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

In this resolution, the Security Council has tried to define an appropriate framework and authorization of force in a peacekeeping operation in a climate of asymmetric attacks. Blue Helmets will now be able to carry out operations to anticipate, deter and combat asymmetric threats against civilians in legitimate defence and in defence of their mandate. This is an important step. It demonstrates the Council's commitment to peace in Mali. It is also an acknowledgement of troop-contributing countries, whose men and women risk their lives and who now have a mandate that will put them in a better position to act in an extremely hostile environment.

However, the resolution is not the end, but rather the beginning of what should be a new chapter. If we want to be successful, this mandate should be accompanied by a significant strengthening of the capacity and equipment of the Mission; in particular, however, it is essential for the parties to accelerate the implementation of the Peace Agreement, which we continue to consider the best opportunity for Mali to achieve peace and security in a lasting way.

Finally, I would like to thank France for its leadership and efficiency in helping the Council reach an agreement on such a solid text. We would also like to highlight the importance we attach to the inclusion of a focus on women and peace and security in a crosscutting way throughout the text. That inclusion fulfils the promise that the Council members made to the Malian women's organizations that we interviewed in March.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Like others, allow me to begin by expressing my sincere condolences to the Government and people of Turkey for the appalling attack on Istanbul International Airport.

Very briefly, with regard to Mali, I welcome the unanimous adoption of resolution 2295 (2016). It provides the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) with the capabilities and terms to carry out its mission successfully. As well as providing additional troops, the resolution clearly states that peacekeepers will take robust action to defend themselves against attacks from groups that are intent on disrupting the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Therefore, this mandate strengthens MINUSMA's ability to tackle asymmetrical threats, for example by providing an enhanced intelligence capability for the Mission. The mandate is fully in line with the principles of peacekeeping. The Mission is authorized to take action in self-defence and in defence of the mandate.

I pay tribute to the peacekeepers risking their lives in Mali. This mandate demonstrates the shared commitment of the Council to help create a more stable and secure Mali. The Government of Mali and northern signatory groups must now use this opportunity to implement the terms of the Peace Agreement without delay.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of France.

I would like to begin by extending France's condolences to and solidarity with Turkey after the terrible attack that took place in Istanbul yesterday, which we vigorously condemn.

By adopting resolution 2295 (2016) today, the Security Council has decided to move in two major directions. First, the Security Council requests the Malian Government and the signatory armed groups to accelerate the practical implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The Government and the signatory armed groups are now engaged in a race against time against the terrorists who want to derail the peace process. The signatory parties have a historical responsibility to come to an agreement to finally provide the people, especially in the north, with the dividends of peace. Through resolution 2295 (2016), the Security Council has set a strategic priority for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) of supporting the implementation of the Peace Agreement, especially the restoration of State authority throughout the entire territory of Mali.

The Security Council strengthens MINUSMA to enable it to adapt to its unique security environment. The Security Council has heard the urgent request made by the Malian President and the Heads of State of West African States, whose soldiers are risking their lives as peacekeepers in Mali. MINUSMA is addressing the threat of terrorist groups. This is an exceptional environment for a United Nations peacekeeping operation, and we are aware of that. In that regard, I reiterate our condolences for all those who have given their lives in their commitment to MINUSMA.

Through resolution 2295 (2016), we have decided to provide MINUSMA with all means necessary to enable it to adapt to this environment. The protection of civilians and the safety of the peacekeepers in Mali is our top priority. More specifically, the Security Council is strengthening MINUSMA on two levels. First of all, with respect to the means at its disposal, we have decided to deploy 2,500 additional troops and police within MINUSMA. This major increase in the force will make it possible to deploy specialized European military units. The Security Council also asks for a reinforcement of MINUSMA's contingent-owned equipment, including medical evacuation helicopters, drones and armoured vehicles. It is crucial that countries with those capabilities respond to that appeal. With regard to its mandate, through resolution 2295 (2016) the Security Council has given MINUSMA the most robust mandate possible in a terrorist environment. It authorizes MINUSMA to use all necessary means to prevent and counter asymmetric threats to civilians and peacekeepers themselves.

By adopting resolution 2295 (2016), the Security Council is fully exercising its responsibility for international peace and security. The Security Council is assuming its responsibility by reminding the people of Mali that it stands alongside them on the path to peace. The Security Council has supported Mali, whose very existence was threatened, since the beginning of the crisis in 2012. It will continue to do so until the Malians can permanently live in peace.

The Security Council has assumed its responsibility by giving the peacekeepers all the means to fulfil their noble and essential mission under the most difficult conditions. Thanks to MINUSMA, the Security Council has helped peacekeeping to evolve on the ground. France has an ambition and hope for the United Nations — France wants the United Nations to protect civilians wherever they are threatened.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to Mr. Diop.

Mr. Diop (Mali) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I take this opportunity to express the condolences and solidarity of the Government of Mali to the Government and the people of Turkey, a brotherly and friendly country, following the deadly attack in Istanbul yesterday. I also extend wishes for a speedy recovery to all the wounded, and reiterate the firm condemnation of the Government of Mali of such terrorist attacks.

My schedule does not allow me to attend this meeting in person at this historic adoption of resolution 2295 (2016), which renews the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The adoption of the resolution is a vital issue for Mali, as expressed by the Prime Minister and Head of Government, Mr. Modibo Keita on 16 June (see S/PV.7719) on the occasion of the consideration of the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Mali (S/2016/498).

In his address to the Security Council and during the Council's spirited debate, Mr. Keita recalled the expectations of Mali and the tremendous hope that the people and Government of Mali pinned on MINUSMA's future mandate. These expectations consist of a more robust and proactive MINUSMA mandate, with strengthened operational capacities and adequate equipment; increased support to the armed and security forces of Mali, which, I recall, are on the front lines of this fight, as well as operational coordination with international forces; and support for regional counter-terrorism initiatives, including those of the Sahel Group of Five (G-5 Sahel), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union.

The Government of Mali is pleased to note the unanimous adoption of resolution 2295 (2016), extending the mandate of MINUSMA until 30 June 2017. I thank all Council members for the consensus reached regarding my country. The new MINUSMA mandate incorporates the expectations of the Government of Mali, providing innovations that will enable the Mission to fully accomplish its mandate and assume its role in supporting the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and all stabilization efforts within Mali, to which Council members have contributed significantly.

We all know that this new strengthened and robust mandate provides the Mission with the means to fulfil its mandate in an environment of exceptional security challenges, characterized by asymmetric attacks. Mali welcomes the adoption of the resolution, whose strategic objective remains the restoration of State authority throughout our national territory, particularly in the northern regions affected by the crisis.

I should like, on behalf of the people and Government of Mali, to extend to all States members of the Security Council our heartfelt gratitude not only for this historic act, but also for the important progress which its adoption represents and above all for sending a strong signal to all the enemies of peace that the United Nations, Mali and the forces of peace will not roll over and will respond in kind in order to continue along the path for peace.

In this regard, I commend the courage and sense of responsibility of the Security Council, which continues to fully assume all its responsibilities in meeting threats to peace, security and international stability. On behalf of Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, President of the Republic of Mali, I should like to express our appreciation to President François Hollande and France, in its capacity as President of the Security Council, for their unwavering commitment to Mali and their efforts to promote peace and stability in the Sahel. The gratitude and deep appreciation of Mali also go to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and our brother, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mahamat Saleh Annadif, for their tireless efforts on behalf of peace and stabilization of our country.

I would be remiss if I did not thank Algeria, Chairman of the Monitoring Committee for the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali , ECOWAS, the African Union, the countries of the G-5 Sahel, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the European Union, the United States of America and all troop-contributing countries for supporting the necessary adaptation of MINUSMA's new mandate to the security environment in which it operates. I am also duty-bound to honour the memory of all the Blue Helmets who have lost their lives in Mali, and recognize all the sacrifices that have been made for the stability of my country.

I conclude by reiterating the firm commitment and determination of the President of the Republic of Mali, Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, to make every effort to

expedite the full implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, the outcome of the Algiers process. The Government of Mali has played and will continue to play its part, and with the help of the Council, will assume its full responsibilities in bringing peace and stability to Mali, to the benefit of all its citizens.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7728

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7728th meeting
Wednesday, 29 June 2016, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle García
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Letter dated 8 June 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/510)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-20013 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Letter dated 8 June 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2016/510)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

The Security will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/580, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/510, which contains a letter dated 8 June 2016 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2296 (2016).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 2296 (2016) on the renewal and extension of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) because we believe that it is very important for the Security Council to give its full support to the Mission so it can discharge its mandate, as set out in resolution 1769 (2007).

My delegation stresses that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Sudan are inviolable and protected. We take this opportunity to reiterate our support for our brothers in the Sudan in their efforts to restore peace and security throughout Darfur. We also note that the situation has improved in most areas in Darfur. We also pay tribute to all the positive efforts of the Government of the Sudan to reach a settlement in Darfur and honour its commitments under the Darfur peace agreement, in particular the holding of a referendum on the administrative status of Darfur within the Sudan, as well as for its positive achievements, including the signing of the road map agreement in April.

The situation in Darfur today is very different from that which prevailed before the Mission was established in 2007. The fact that the Mission shall remain in the region without a time frame to determine its future is therefore not realistic. We need a clearly formulated exit strategy, with the full participation of the African Union, including detailed, measurable benchmarks that could be assessed in real terms. In that regard, I commend the efforts of the Joint Working Group to formulate the UNAMID exit strategy, the special report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2016/510), and the results and recommendations contained therein, which seek to implement the benchmarks of the UNAMID exit strategy. We also stress the importance of focusing on the development of Darfur and the reconstruction of its economic, political and judicial institutions, in accordance with the priorities and the needs and requirements of the Government of Sudan and the five states of Darfur.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Bearing in mind the important stabilizing role of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the Russian delegation voted in favour of resolution 2296 (2016), extending the mandate of the hybrid mission. As a result of intensive consultations, members of the Council managed to make the text sufficiently balanced. In particular, the resolution reflects the fact that the security situation

in Darfur has significantly improved of late and that relative calm prevails in four of the five states of the region. Isolated pockets of resistance on the part of insurgents are found only in the mountainous region of Jebel Marra in Central Darfur.

Against that backdrop, we must raise the issue of developing an exit strategy for UNAMID. For us, an important provision of the resolution is that which tasks the Secretary-General with providing recommendations by October about benchmarks for UNAMID. We hope that future reports of the Secretariat will fully reflect the conclusions and recommendations of the Joint Working Group tasked with developing an exit strategy for UNAMID.

The recently published special report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2016/510) does not meet those criteria at all. It is not by chance that the African Union Peace and Security Council has shown relatively little enthusiasm for that document. The Joint Working Group on Darfur adequately incorporates the views of all parties interested in the situation in Darfur and various aspects of UNAMID activities, including that of the host country. If the Secretariat took the conclusions and proposals of the Working Group into account, that would be fully in accordance with the basic principles of peacekeeping.

At the same time, we cannot agree with all the provisions of the resolution just adopted. For example, we in now way share the concern expressed about the referendum in Darfur. Over 70 per cent of voters of the region took part in that referendum. I believe that the Security Council should show respect for the expression of the will of the voters of Darfur, especially against the backdrop of recent referendums in Africa and Europe. Year after year, the tone of the resolutions on Darfur have become increasingly negative. It is our impression that the only goal of the authors and co-authors of those resolutions is basically to ramp up pressure on the Government of the Sudan, using every opportunity at their disposal. Unfortunately, it is UNAMID that often finds itself hostage to those political games.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China appreciates the commitment of the Government of the Sudan to the promotion of national dialogue, peace and stability in the Darfur region and its economic development, and to the successful organization of the referendum in Darfur. China welcomes the mediation efforts of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and the signing by the Government of the Sudan of the road map agreement proposed by the Panel. The international community should urge the relevant armed groups and opposition to expeditiously sign the road map agreement and participate in the national dialogue and the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur in order to achieve a comprehensive political settlement of the Darfur question.

China appreciates the work of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) to promote the political process in Darfur, mediate and resolve intercommunal conflicts, and assist in delivering humanitarian relief. United Nations peacekeeping operations should effectively respect the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of host countries, heed the opinion of host countries and adjust the scale and mandate of operations in a timely manner, in keeping with the changes in local circumstances and needs. China welcomes the work of the Sudanese Government to assist UNAMID in implementing its mandate. We hope that the Secretariat, the African Union and the Sudanese Government will continue to take advantage of the tripartite mechanism and the platform of the Joint Working Group to strengthen communications and consultation, duly address any problems that emerge during the course of cooperation, and strive to formulate a practical and reasonable exit strategy for the Mission as soon as possible.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates its support for the work of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). We acknowledge its valuable contribution to achieving the strategic priorities of the mission, especially regarding the protection of civilians, the facilitation of access to humanitarian assistance and mediation, including through its conflict prevention and mitigation strategy and its promotion of grass-roots dialogue.

We also categorically condemn attacks on UNAMID, its personnel and its facilities, whose inviolability must be respected in accordance with international law. We also like reiterate our call on the parties to the conflict to give their full support to the work of UNAMID so that it can fully and effectively implement the mandate entrusted to it, in the framework of close cooperation with the Government of the Sudan.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela voted in favour of resolution 2296 (2016), which renews the UNAMID mandate for one year. We are convinced that it is essential to maintain the unity of the Security Council in addressing this important issue and our support for UNAMID. We hope that the same positive spirit will prevail in promoting a negotiated political solution to the prolonged conflict that continues to affect this brotherly African country, in particular in the region of Darfur.

In that sense, Venezuela reaffirms that a political rather than military solution is the only way to end the conflict in Darfur through a direct and inclusive political dialogue between the parties to the conflict without preconditions of any kind, which would promote stability, development and lasting peace in that country and resolve the very complex humanitarian situation there. We therefore call on the parties that have not yet done so, particularly the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid, to subscribe to the road map agreement, which we believe will serve as the basis for achieving lasting peace. We also think that the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur establishes a framework that should be used as a foundation for negotiations between the parties to the conflict, complemented by initiatives such as the national dialogue convened by the Government in Khartoum and the internal dialogue and consultations in Darfur.

In that regard, and considering the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur to be a positive step, our delegation welcomes the referendum on the administrative status of Darfur, held from 11 to 13 April, in which more than 90 per cent of eligible voters took part, and for which the African Union and the League of Arab States served as observers. We also believe that the efforts of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel, led by former South African President Thado Mbeki, as the primary mediation group, are critical to revitalizing the peace process and putting an end to the conflict, for which we would like to reiterate our full support.

Lastly, we call on the parties to respect the human rights and international humanitarian law, in line with the relevant legal instruments. We also express our firm support for the work of the African Union, based on the search for African solutions to African problems.

Mr. Pressman (United States of America): The United States supports the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2296 (2016), renewing the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) for another year. The United States welcomes the Government of the Sudan's recent declaration of a unilateral cessation of hostilities in Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile. We would like to see that declaration extended to the Darfur region as, unfortunately, fighting by the Government and its proxies continues in Darfur.

An end to military offences and fighting in all of those areas would bring much-needed relief to thousands of Sudanese and create an improved environment for dialogue, leading to a political solution. Lasting peace will come only from a negotiated solution that addresses the key political and security drivers of conflict in all areas of the Sudan. Civilians continue to suffer in Darfur with, according to the United Nations, at least 80,000 newly displaced in 2016 alone and more than 2 million internally displaced persons who are in need of aid and cannot return to their homes.

In the absence of a comprehensive political agreement and in the face of those pressing needs, UNAMID plays a critical role in protecting civilians and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Darfur. Any calls for the mission to leave the Sudan are woefully premature. We urge the Government of the Sudan to allow the mission to carry out the mandate the Security Council has given it, including by not placing restrictions on its freedom of movement or its needed food and supplies. We understand that as of 23 June, all UNAMID food-ration shipments that had been held at Port Sudan by the Government of the Sudan had been cleared for release. We welcome that development and call on the Government of the Sudan to urgently release of the nearly 300 remaining containers of much-needed equipment, in compliance with its obligations under its status-of-forces agreement with the United Nations.

I would like to briefly address the report of the Joint Working Group, which has been raised by some colleagues. The United States certainly welcomes and encourages cooperation among the Government of the Sudan, the United Nations and the African Union to efficiently and effectively implement the UNAMID mandate. But we must be clear that the Security Council, in order to conduct its business, will continue to rely primarily on the analysis and advice of the Secretary-General about the situation in countries on our agenda.

We believe that the Joint Working Group's report downplays the scale of fighting in Darfur and is inconsistent with the special report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (S/2016/510). For example, the Joint Working Group assesses that there were "no more rebel movements in four states", but the special report finds that the Sudanese military claimed victories in South Darfur earlier this year, conducted bombings in Central Darfur and pursued rebels in North Darfur in January.

Moreover, we know from the past 10 years that the rebel movements are constantly mobile, and that any single snapshot in time is not necessarily indicative of a larger trend. Also, how do we square the Joint Working Group's conclusions that "access is granted for most patrols" with the conclusion of the special report that UNAMID continued "to face severe restrictions on its access and freedom of movement in Darfur" (*S/2016/510, para. 48*)?

Lastly, the Joint Working Group emphasizes the beginning of voluntary returns and early recovery assistance that has been provided to the people of Darfur, but ignores the surge of displacements that occurred earlier this year in Jebel Marra, where tens of thousands of new internally displaced persons are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

Finally, we reiterate that any exit strategy for UNAMID is pretty clear. It is one linked to the achievement of the agreed benchmarks on an inclusive political process, the protection of civilians and the prevention of violence. We look forward to progress on achieving those benchmarks.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): As the Security Council's penholder for Darfur, the United Kingdom wholeheartedly welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2296 (2016), which extends the important work of African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) for another year. I also welcome the constructive spirit in which all members of the Security Council engaged with us during the negotiations.

The situation in Darfur for many is desperate. Millions of people have fled their homes. Millions of people need humanitarian assistance just to survive. To the United Kingdom, the need for UNAMID is therefore clear. The resolution is much more than a simple mandate renewal; it is a vital recommitment to protecting civilians in Darfur, to improving the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and to supporting mediation, both between the Government and the Darfur armed groups, as well as among communities. The text strikes a balance. It enables UNAMID to provide the protection and support necessary for the vulnerable in Darfur, but it also seeks to help deliver progress on the benchmarks that will ultimately enable UNAMID to leave Darfur, as my Egyptian colleagues and others have just set out.

In adopting the resolution unanimously today — and I very much agree with the comments made by my Venezuelan colleague on the importance of unanimity — we have sent an important message of support to UNAMID and to the people of Darfur. For the Government of the Sudan, it is an honest but fair message. Through this resolution, we have not shied away from the situation in Darfur. We have clearly expressed our concern at the fighting in Jebel Marra and the impact on civilians, especially of aerial bombardments. We have also called on the Government of the Sudan to ensure unfettered access for UNAMID and humanitarian personnel and to release all UNAMID shipments. It is essential that UNAMID have the food and equipment that it needs to deliver on its mandate. We welcome the recent progress on this issue and trust that it will continue.

We have welcomed positive developments in other areas, such as the Government of the Sudan's adoption of an action plan for the protection of children from violations in armed conflict, and we have welcomed the Government's signing of the road map agreement proposed by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel. We urge non-signatory groups to join them and sign this important document.

I am confident that this resolution provides the basis for a strong relationship between the Council, the African Union, UNAMID and the Government of the Sudan. I hope that it will enable us all to work together in a spirit of mutual cooperation to the benefit of those suffering in Darfur.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to express our thanks and appreciation to all of the members of the Council, especially those members with whom we have maintained contact since the draft was presented for the extension of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). I

should like also to express our profound appreciation to all those who have made every effort to study and consider the viewpoint of my delegation as well as the undeniably true information that we have submitted on the situation in Darfur.

I should like also to welcome the general assessments and statements made by the various members of the Council in which they explained that the situation in Darfur has improved. In our assessment of the security, humanitarian and political situation in Darfur, we do not rely only on random documents; there is much information we could invoke and advance, but the fact is that we rely on the realities on the ground, not coloured by any prior position or objective that could distort or in many cases undermine the truth.

When the events that have befallen the five states of Darfur during the period covered by the report of the Secretary-General (S/2016/510) and by resolution 2296 (2016), which has just been adopted by the Council, the events in Darfur cannot be denied, ignored or refuted. Darfur today has no rebellion or armed movements; the presence of those armed movements and groups was the reason for the deployment of the African Union forces in Darfur until 2006. This led to the deployment of UNAMID since 2007; that is the reason why we have UNAMID in Darfur. This is its raison d'être. If the purpose of UNAMID is no longer there, then its presence is no longer necessary. UNAMID is not there for any other reason. It has not come to secure its supplies from Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast; this is something that we leave to the administrative bodies responsible for that matter.

The resolution that was adopted today extending UNAMID's mandate for another year is replete with contradictions between its various paragraphs and contradicts the facts on the ground that we see in Darfur today. After the conclusion of the military operations in most parts of Darfur and recently in Jebel Marra, the humanitarian situation has started to improve, and Darfur has seen the voluntary return of internally displaced persons - 800,000 returnees - according to the May 2016 statement made by the humanitarian aid commission. The last of those movements came after the Jebel Marra incidents; 24,000 people returned, according to the UNAMID sector chief for central Darfur, who had visited the area of Jebel Marra only three days prior.

Also, there has been some improvement and progress in connection with the plan to collect weapons from civilians and in terms of all of the efforts that are being made to reach a political solution through the implementation of the various provisions of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, which remains the single internationally agreed forum for the achievement of peace and security in Darfur.

Today Darfur is free of any organized military presence of military armed movements, as I said earlier. Those movements had been wreaking havoc in Darfur since 2003. The military operations that have been undertaken by the Sudanese armed forces in Jebel Marra have put end to the excesses committed by the Abdul Wahid faction. We have put an end to his brigandry and to his targeting of civilians, and ensured the safety of the land roads that connect that area with other parts of the Sudan. Our efforts have enabled students, for the first time in 13 years – I repeat, for the first time in 13 years – to go back to school and take examinations for various educational certificates in the Sudan although they had exceeded the normal age for taking such examinations. That was the fate of children given the acts carried out by the Abdul Wahid factions, which threatened their parents and their property if they did not send their children to his camps to fight alongside his soldiers.

This is something that cannot be denied. The Government of the Sudan has been asking since 2014 that UNAMID start to devise its exit strategy. The Joint Working Group was formed as a result, with the participation of the Government of the Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations. The Group has carried out two assessment visits to the five states of Darfur, the last of those visits was in the month of May.

The Working Group showed clearly that the situation in Darfur had developed in a way that would permit the drawdown of the mission and the withdrawal of UNAMID units from a number of positions. However, some in this international Organization unfortunately refused to accept this recommendation, despite the fact that it had been accepted by the representatives of the African Union, a regional organization whose recommendations constitute a significant dimension in the decisions taken by the Council. We can therefore see no justification whatsoever for paragraph 27 of resolution 2296 (2016). We see no justification for limiting the task of the Joint Working Group in

presenting recommendations; this is something that the Government of Sudan totally rejects.

Let me convey to the Council our categorical view that it is extremely important for the Group to continue its work to implement the exit strategy in the manner agreed at previous meetings. I must also underline that our Government believes that in the work of the Secretariat, especially the work of the Department for Peacekeeping Operations, we see a lot of procrastination and delaying tactics, which do not serve the cooperation and coordination efforts that are being made by the Government of the Sudan. Therefore it is necessary for this administration to take into consideration the need to formulate an exit strategy, view our opinions with respect, and stop prevaricating and the use of delaying tactics. The Government of the Sudan has been asking for an exit strategy for nine years, during which a great deal has been attained. This is the only way to underline the success achieved by UNAMID in attaining its purpose and letting it be known to the members of the Council. The Government of the Sudan is fully prepared to undertake its own assessment or to welcome another Security Council visit to assess the situation in Darfur and to collect the evidence that some wish to ignore or refute.

Despite all the complications and obstacles, we reiterate our resolve to achieve peace and justice and to ensure the return of displaced persons to Darfur, in full, sincere, impartial and faithful cooperation with the Council, so that we can rebuild our beloved homeland and contribute thereby to world peace and security.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7729

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7729th meeting
Thursday, 30 June 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Japan	Mr. Akahori
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle García
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-20198 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mladenov.

Mr. Mladenov: Over the past decades, a broad consensus has been built around the understanding that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can be resolved only on the basis of a two-State solution. Palestinians and Israelis have accepted this vision. Countries of the region have also repeatedly endorsed this outcome. At the beginning of June, the Secretary-General and Ministers from some 30 countries gathered in Paris to discuss how to put forward incentives that could kick-start momentum towards that goal. The underlying message from Paris was clear — we must act decisively now or continue dealing with the damaging repercussions for years to come.

Despite all these efforts and despite the two-State vision remaining the professed goal of both sides, the conflict grinds on. Negative trends on the ground continue to jeopardize prospects for peace. Hope dwindles as the once formidable constituencies for peace erode on both sides. Extremists rise, seeking to set the agenda and shape reality. Radicalism feeds fear, mutual distrust breeds desperation, and ultimately all this fosters violence and terror.

Earlier this month, Israel was rocked by a brutal terror attack. On the evening of 8 June, two Palestinians opened fire in the heart of Tel Aviv, killing four Israelis and injuring nine others. Just a few hours ago, a 13 year-old Israeli girl was viciously stabbed to death by a Palestinian attacker who entered in her home in the West Bank. And on 21 June, a Palestinian teenager was shot and killed on a highway by the Israeli security forces.

If the first two events were clearly acts of terror and the second was referred to as "a mistake" that cut short an innocent life, all three incidents clearly illustrate the environment of fear in which Palestinians and Israelis alike have lived for generations. I unequivocally condemn all these tragic losses of life. Both tragedies, unfortunately, provide political fodder for cynical advocates of divisiveness, further undermining trust between the communities. I extend my sincere condolences to the families of the victims and call on the authorities to swiftly bring to justice those responsible for these acts.

Palestinian frustration cannot be wished away; it cannot be vanquished by aggressive security measures, arrests or punitive home demolitions. Neither is it helped when Israeli ministers openly reject the very notion of a Palestinian State or call for the complete annexation of Area C; but nor will the violence and terror fuelled by resentment bring about a Palestinian State. A peaceful future for both peoples cannot emerge on the back of statements that glorify terror and justify killing. Mutual respect cannot come as a result of stabbings, shootings and car-rammings.

Recognizing the urgent need to reverse this destructive dynamic, the Middle East Quartet has worked with the parties and key regional stakeholders to discuss how to preserve the two-State solution. Last September, the Quartet expressed its serious concern about the current trends on the ground and its strong support for significant steps that would help stabilize the situation, show meaningful progress towards a two-State reality, and restore belief among Palestinians and Israelis that negotiated peace remains feasible. In February, the Quartet noted the absence of such constructive steps and decided to prepare a report on the situation on the ground, including recommendations on the way forward. I am pleased to be able to brief the Security Council today on the conclusions of the report.

Let me begin by thanking President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu and their teams for their constructive engagement and contributions, without which the report would not have been possible. In completing our work by consensus, we in the Quartet have been guided by the belief that our role is to build bridges, to state the facts in an unbiased manner, and to engage constructively with the parties, the region and the broader international community in order to provide for a constructive way forward.

The report will not provide a complete review of the humanitarian, political, legal, and security aspects of the situation. It focuses on the major threats to achieving a negotiated peace and offers recommendations on the way forward. In it, the Quartet pledges its active support for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and reaffirms that a negotiated two-State outcome that meets Israeli security needs and Palestinian aspirations to statehood and sovereignty, ends the occupation that began in 1967, and resolves all permanent status issues is the only way to achieve enduring peace.

The Quartet believes, however, that important progress can be made now on the ground by each side independently demonstrating a sincere commitment to advancing the goal of two States. To that end, there is an urgent need for both sides to comply with their basic commitments under existing agreements and to take steps to prevent entrenching a one-State reality of perpetual occupation and conflict

Allow me to outline the three trends that the Quartet report has concluded severely undermine hope for peace. First are continuing violence and terrorism and the incitement that fuels them. Second is the continuing policy of settlement expansion and related policies in the West Bank. Third is the situation in Gaza and the lack of control over Gaza by the Palestinian Authority. Let me stress once again that these negative trends can and must be urgently reversed in order to advance the two-State solution on the ground.

The report will provide more detail on these trends and expand on the reasons why we in the Quartet are concerned about them. The main objective of the report is not to assign blame, but rather to provide a way forward to support the goal we all share of achieving a negotiated two-State solution. We hope to provide a constructive path that can help advance the two-State solution on the ground and create the conditions necessary for meaningful negotiations in the future.

The report contains recommendations to both sides, and specifically to the Palestinians and Israelis in relation to violence, incitement to violence, Israeli settlement construction and related policies, and Palestinian unity and institution-building. It reiterates its call from September of last year on Israel to implement positive and significant policy shifts, particularly in Area C, consistent with the idea of transitioning to greater Palestinian civil authority, as contemplated by prior agreements. As the Quartet said back then, progress in the areas of housing, water, energy, communications, agriculture and natural resources can be made while respecting Israel's legitimate security needs.

I hope that, on the basis of the report, the two parties will engage with the Quartet in order to constructively move the process forward. Once the full text of the report is published — which we hope will be tomorrow morning —I also encourage the Secuirty Council to welcome it and support the efforts of the Quartet.

In closing, let me once again emphasize the urgent need for the parties to engage in the implementation of the recommendations in the report. The Quartet has outlined a reasonable set of steps that, if implemented sincerely and resolutely with the support of the international community, could set Israelis and Palestinians firmly along a navigable course towards establishing a comprehensive peace, with historic implications for the entire region. But let me also be unequivocally clear that a permanent status agreement ending the conflict can be achieved only through direct bilateral negotiations, the outcome of which cannot be prejudged by unilateral steps.

As the Secretary-General said in Jerusalem two days ago,

> "No solution to the conflict will be possible without the recognition that both Palestinians and Jews have an undeniable historic and religious connection to this land. No solution can come through violence; it must be based on mutual respect and the recognition of the legitimate aspirations of both peoples. No solution can be imposed from the outside; it must be based on direct negotiations on the final status issues."

A peaceful future is what is at stake here. Taking bold steps to move beyond the empty platitudes, beyond the mutual accusations, and beyond the deeply entrenched lack of trust will require leadership and vision that have been starkly absent from this conflict for far too long. It is time for both sides to rise to the challenge. I can assure you, Mr. President, that the Secretary-General, including through his role in the Quartet, will continue unwaveringly to support Israelis and Palestinians in overcoming their divisions and achieving a just and lasting resolution to the conflict and the establishment of a Palestinian State living side by side with the State of Israel in peace, security and mutual recognition.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Mladenov for his briefing.

Before inviting Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject, as this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of June, I would like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of France to the members of the Council, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives, their respective staffs and the secretariat of the Council for the very valuable support they have given to us.

It has been a very busy month, and one in which we rallied to consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone, of course, or without the hard work, support and positive contribution of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, as well as the relevant conference service officers. As we end our presidency, I know I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of Japan good luck in the month of July.

The meeting rose at 10.20 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.7730

Security Council

Distr.: General
7 July 2016

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 7730th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 7 July 2016, at 10 a.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"On 7 July 2016, the Security Council, pursuant to annex II, sections A and B of resolution 1353 (2001), held its 7730th meeting in private with the troop- and police-contributing countries to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

"The President invited Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The Security Council and the troop- and police-contributing countries heard a briefing by Mr. Ladsous.

"Members of the Council, Mr. Ladsous and representatives of participating contributing countries had an exchange of views."

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United Nations S/PV.7731

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7731st meeting
Thursday, 7 July 2016, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bessho	(Japan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. De la Calle García
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (S/2016/430)

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16-20744 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: As this is the first formal meeting of the Council for the month of July, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador François Delattre, Permanent Representative of France, for his service as President of the Council for the month of June. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Delattre and his delegation for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (S/2016/430)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Somalia to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2016/591, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Angola, France, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/430, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on Somalia.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2297 (2016).

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements after the voting.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 2297 (2016), reauthorizing the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), as we believe in the important role it plays in support of the peace and reconciliation process in Somalia through the efforts and sacrifices its personnel have made since 2007. My delegation affirms that the positive developments witnessed in Somalia could not have been achieved without those efforts to provide an environment conducive to the ongoing political efforts of all parties in that country.

Those efforts have energized international support for the political process and allowed the Security Council to send a clear message through its visit to Somalia in May concerning the importance of concluding the electoral process as soon as possible. The timing of that visit was highly instrumental in supporting the reconciliation process and facilitating the adoption of the electoral calendar for 2016. In that context, I commend the efforts of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, his Prime Minister and Government, and all federal leaders to adopt the electoral model and launch the procedural and logistical arrangements for its implementation.

My delegation affirms its support for the peace and reconciliation efforts in Somalia and urges all parties to build on their achievements in order to end the prolonged conflict and to support the Somali President's call for the coordination of support, in particular in training and capacity-building for Somalia's national institutions so that the Government can assume responsibility for ensuring peace and security. We also support the Secretary-General's cooperation with the African Union with a view to undertaking a joint assessment of AMISOM in support of the next phase of State-building in Somalia. We appreciate all efforts being made to that end.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I congratulate Japan on its assumption of the Council presidency, and thank France for its very efficient running of the Council's business last month.

I should like to take this opportunity to join Egypt in paying tribute to the role of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). As we review the AMISOM mandate, we should remember that without the bravery and sacrifice of its troops, Somalia would not have seen the progress which it has made. It is esse· tial that we ensure that AMISOM troop contributors commit for at least the next two years, because that progress can easily be undone.

It is equally important that the Federal Government of Somalia deliver on its commitment to building credible security forces, not only to address the legitimate concerns of AMISOM troop contributors, but also to ensure that peace and security in Somalia are secured for the long term. Without that, all our efforts on elections and the Somali political process will have been wasted.

We are grateful for all of the engagement and support of partners in preparing a draft text and in working on its details. We will work hard to provide clear direction and prioritization to AMISOM's tasks in this critical year. That means liberating the Somali people from the threat of Al-Shabaab through deliberate operations, enabling the security environment needed for the electoral process to take place, as the representative of Egypt rightly emphasized, and supporting the gradual hand-over of security responsibilities to the Somali security forces, which must be the overarching objective of us all.

Progress in Somalia is about partnership, and in that partnership we need every organization and stakeholder — the international community, the United Nations, donors, the African Union and the Federal Government of Somalia itself — to play its part. That cooperation will enable AMISOM to leave Somalia in a stronger and more secure place than when it first deployed, and it will provide long-term regional security. We will therefore continue to support AMISOM and the essential work that the force is doing, as the Council has just shown by its unanimous vote today.

Mr. Xu Zhongsheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China voted in favour of resolution 2297 (2016). The Somali peace process is currently at a critical juncture. Holding general elections in August, as scheduled, will establish conditions conducive to Somalia's achievement of peace, stability and development as soon as possible.

The Council visited Somalia in May, and today it unanimously adopted a resolution extending the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), demonstrating the international community's commitment to helping the Federal Government of Somalia to take the political process forward, uproot the threat posed by Al-Shabaab, and expedite the country's peaceful reconstruction.

China is grateful to the African Union and the countries of the region, which have consistently made great contributions and sacrifices in order to maintain the security and stability of Somalia. China hopes that, in the light of the demands of the countries of the region, the international community will help Somalia and AMISOM to strengthen their capacity-building, and in particular provide the Mission with consistent and stable logistical support and give Somalia robust assistance in advancing the political process and promoting economic and social development.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.